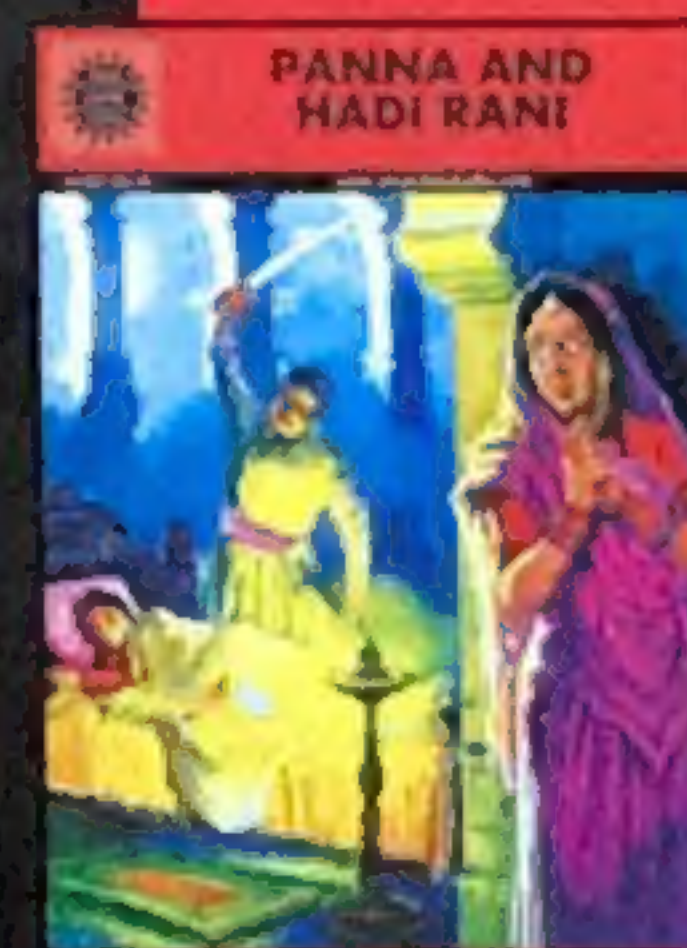


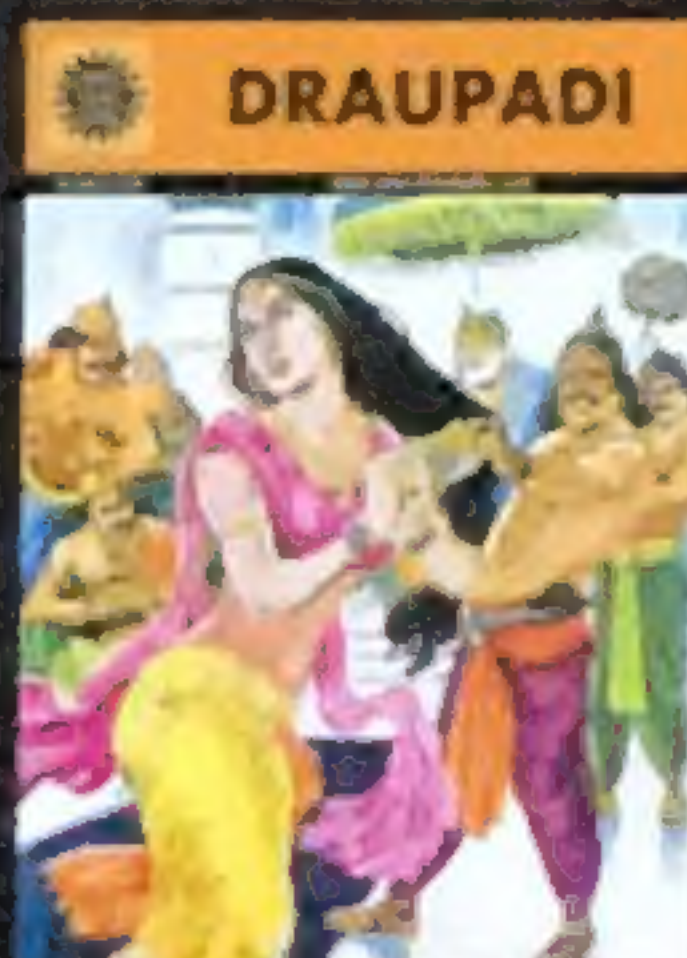
ROOPMATI

The story of Roopmati, the princess of Dharampuri, and Baz Bahadur, the Sultan of Mandu, is one of India's greatest love stories. From the day of her fateful meeting with the sultan, the princess loved no one else, sacrificing all just to be one with him. Defying every norm she married him. But their happiness was short lived. The Mughal Emperor Akbar wanted Mandu and commanded his general, Adham Khan to march on it.

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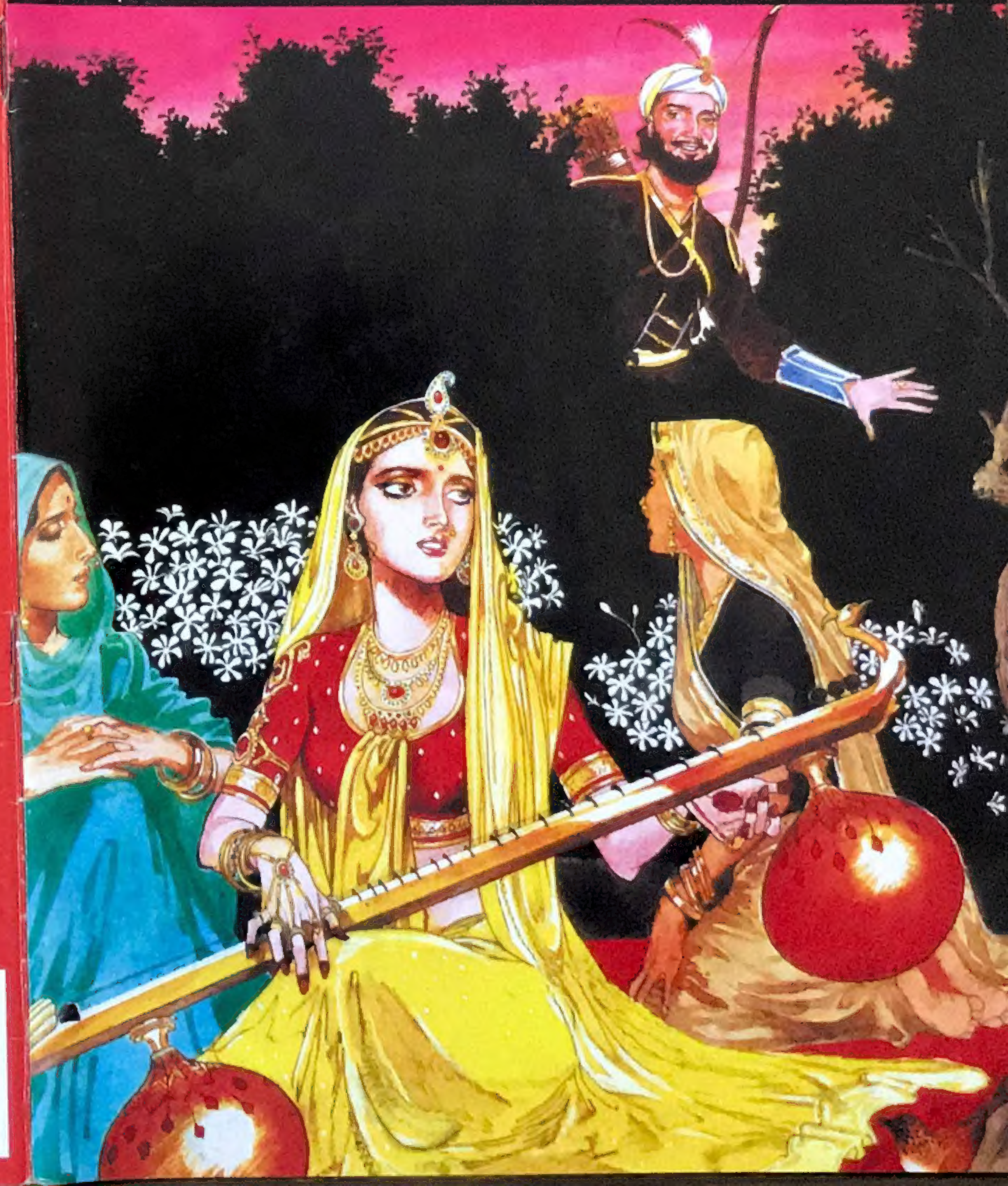
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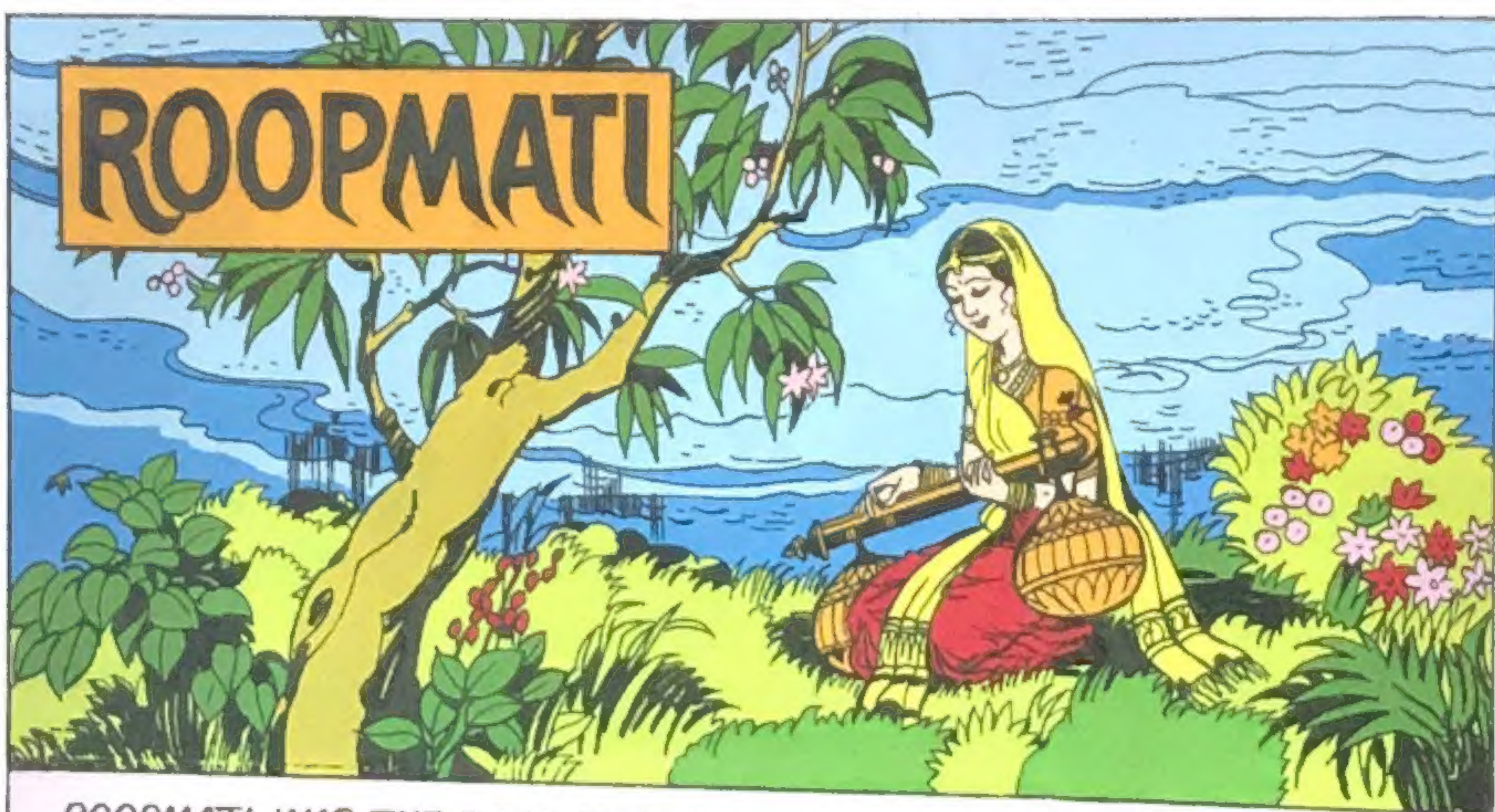


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ROOPMATI

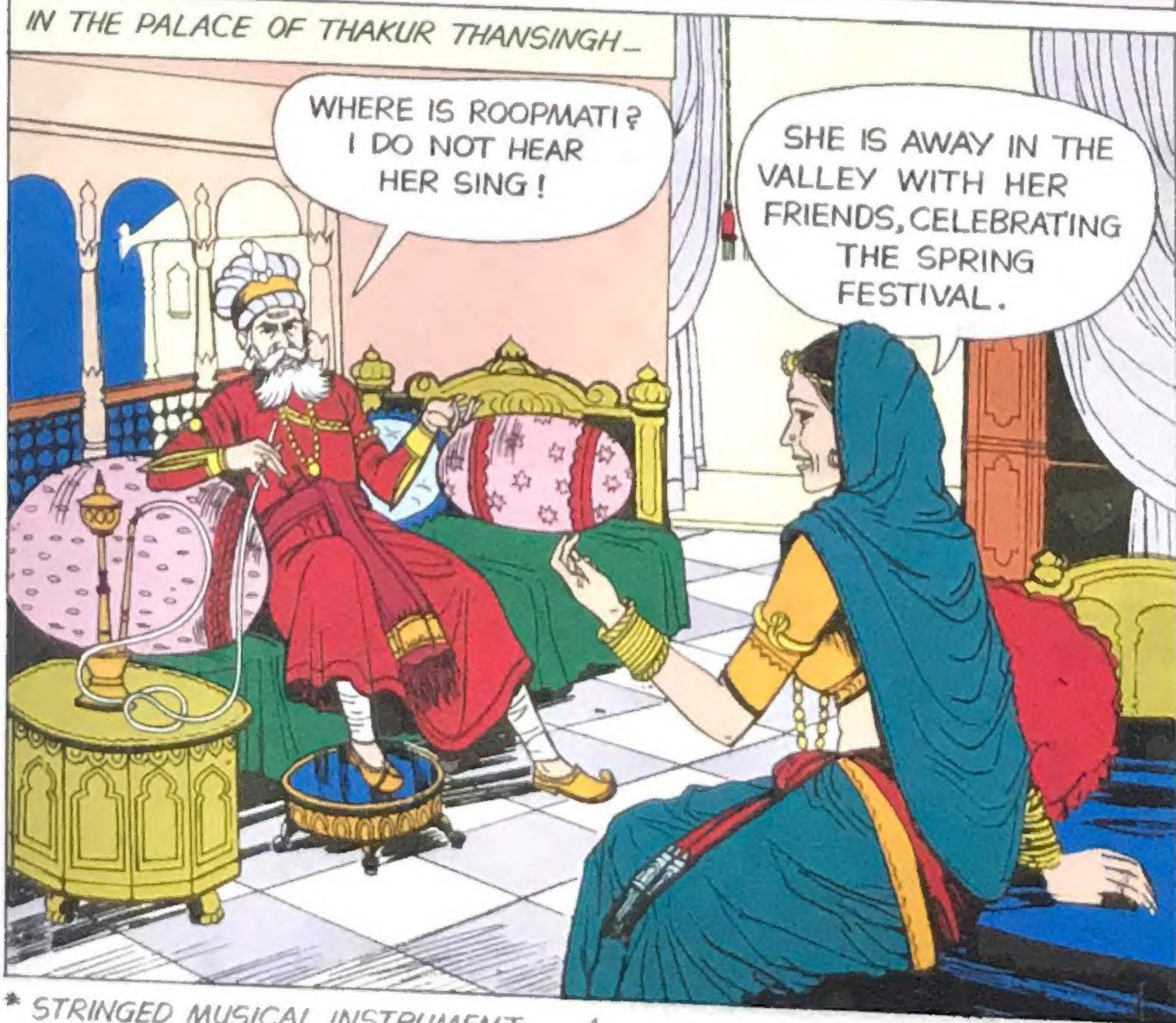


ROOPMATI WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A RATHOR RAJPUT, THAKUR THANSINGH OF DHARAMPURI. SHE EXCELLED IN SINGING AND PLAYING THE BEEN.* BORN AND BROUGHT UP ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER REWA, IT IS SAID THAT THE MUSIC OF ITS WATERS PASSED INTO HER VERY SOUL.

IN THE PALACE OF THAKUR THANSINGH...

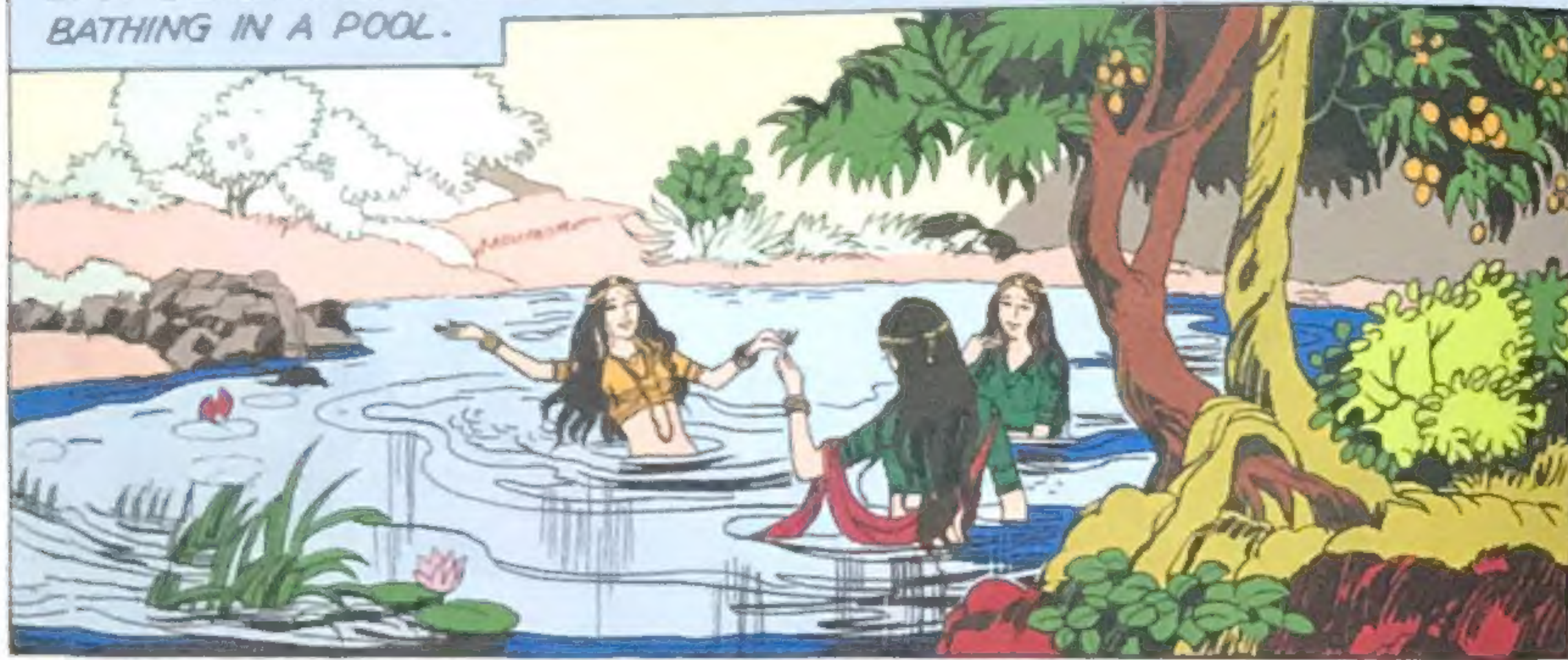
WHERE IS ROOPMATI?
I DO NOT HEAR
HER SING!

SHE IS AWAY IN THE
VALLEY WITH HER
FRIENDS, CELEBRATING
THE SPRING
FESTIVAL.



* STRINGED MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

IN A BEAUTIFUL FOREST NEARBY, ROOPMATI AND HER FRIENDS WERE BATHING IN A POOL.



HAVING BATHED —



ALL OF THEM SAT BENEATH THE THICK SHADE OF A BANYAN TREE AND LISTENED TO ROOPMATI'S SONG.



ON THAT VERY DAY, BAZ BAHADUR, THE SULTAN OF MANDU, ALONG WITH A GALLANT ARRAY, HAD SET OUT TO HUNT.



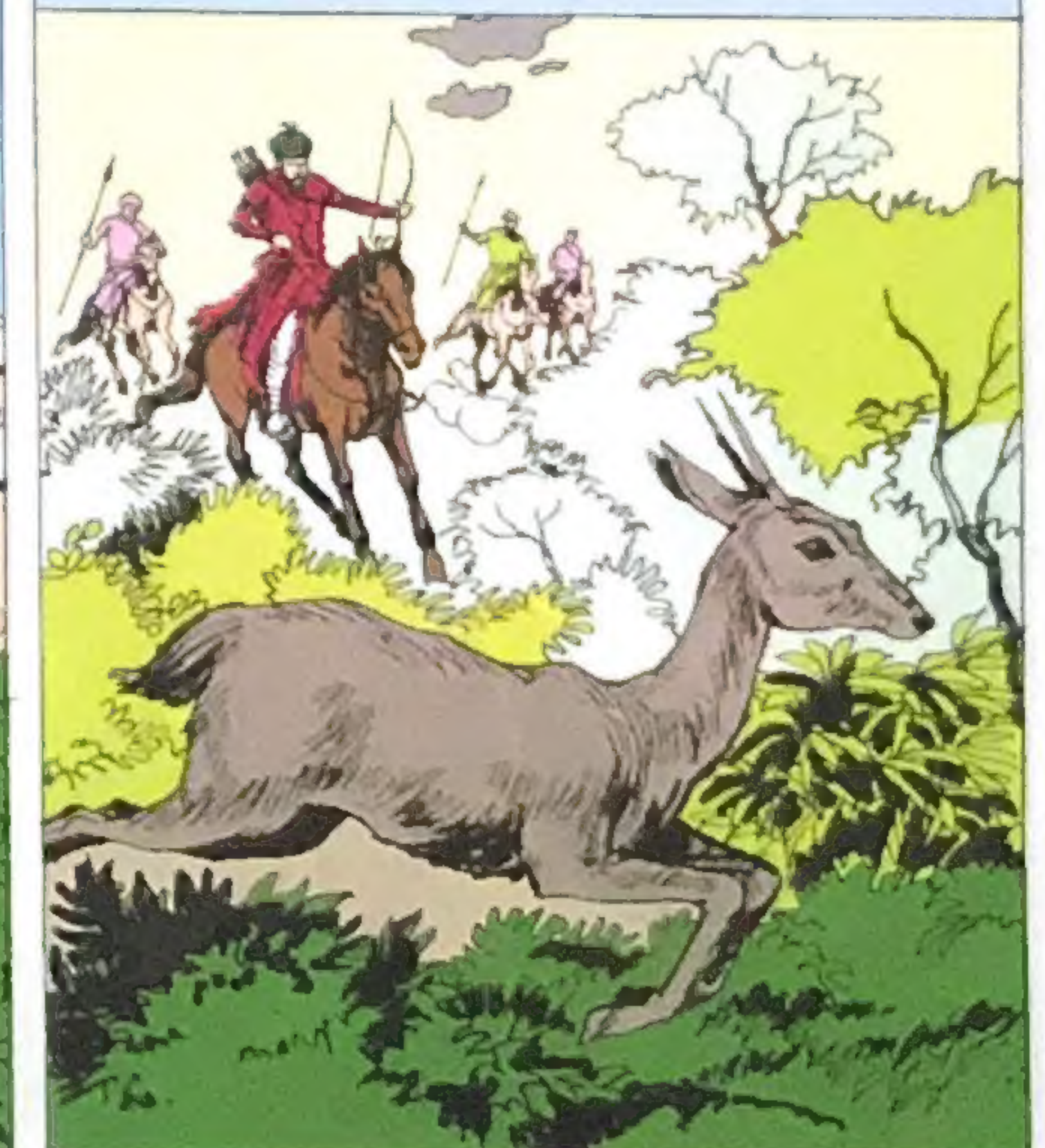
ON SIGHTING A DEER, BAZ BAHADUR AIMED HIS ARROW AT THE ANIMAL.



THE DEER MADE A DASH INTO THE HEAVY FOLIAGE OF THE FOREST.



THE DEER RAN FARTHER INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST, PURSUED BY BAZ BAHADUR AND HIS MEN.





THE ANIMAL HAS FLED LIKE THE WIND! SCATTER ABOUT, MEN, AND SEE IF YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON IT. THREE OF YOU COME ALONG WITH ME.



BUT THE ANIMAL MANAGED TO EVADE THEM.

WE HAVE LOST TRACK OF THE DEER. LET US RETURN.



ALL OF A SUDDEN, THROUGH THE FOREST STILLNESS—

HUSH! DO I HEAR SOMEONE SING? WHAT A FINE VOICE!

IT COMES FROM THAT DIRECTION.

BAZ BAHADUR AND HIS MEN FOLLOWED THE VOICE AND REACHED THE PLACE WHERE ROOPMATI WAS SINGING, ABSORBED IN HER SONG, UNAWARE OF SPYING STRANGERS.



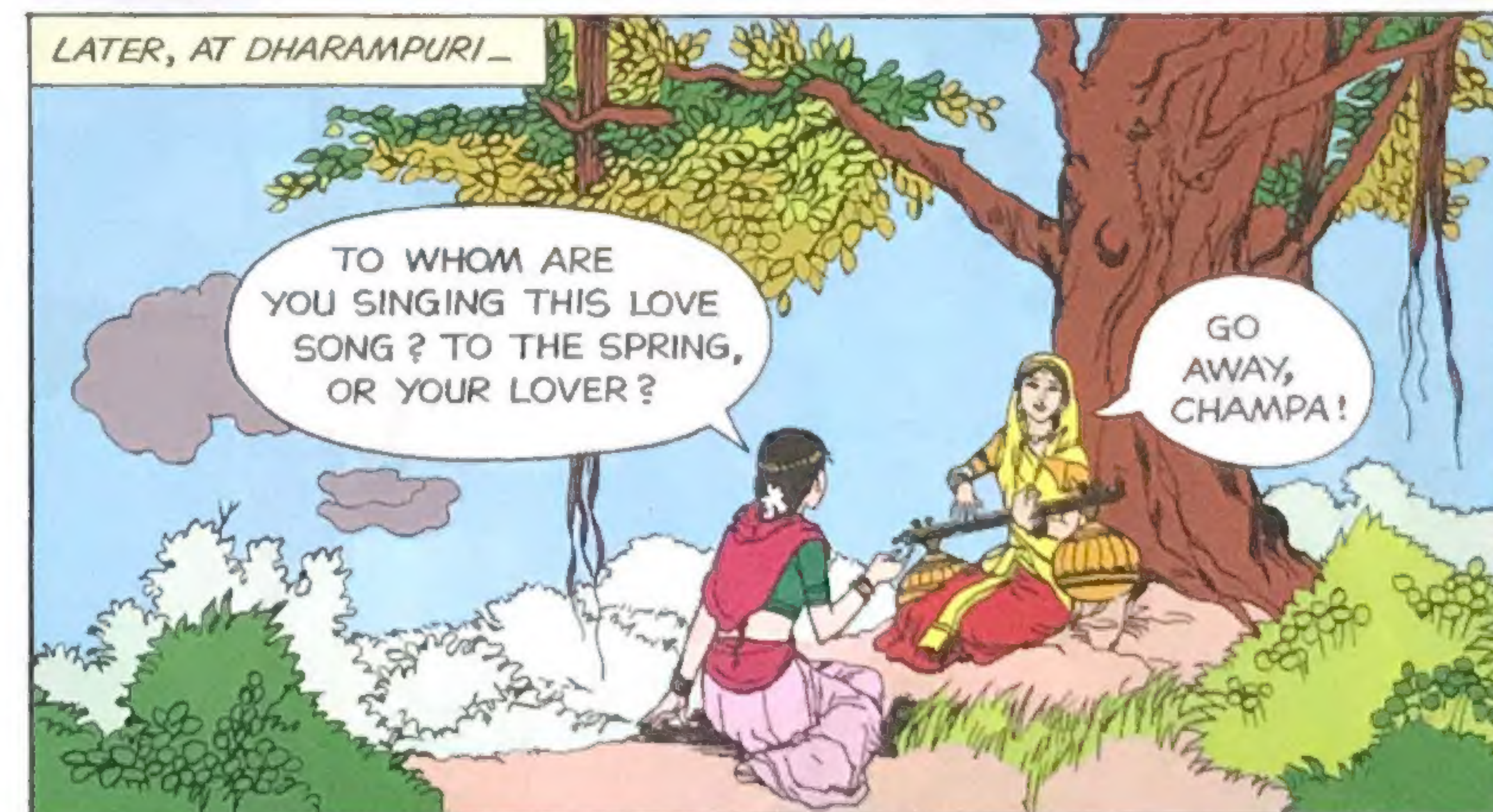
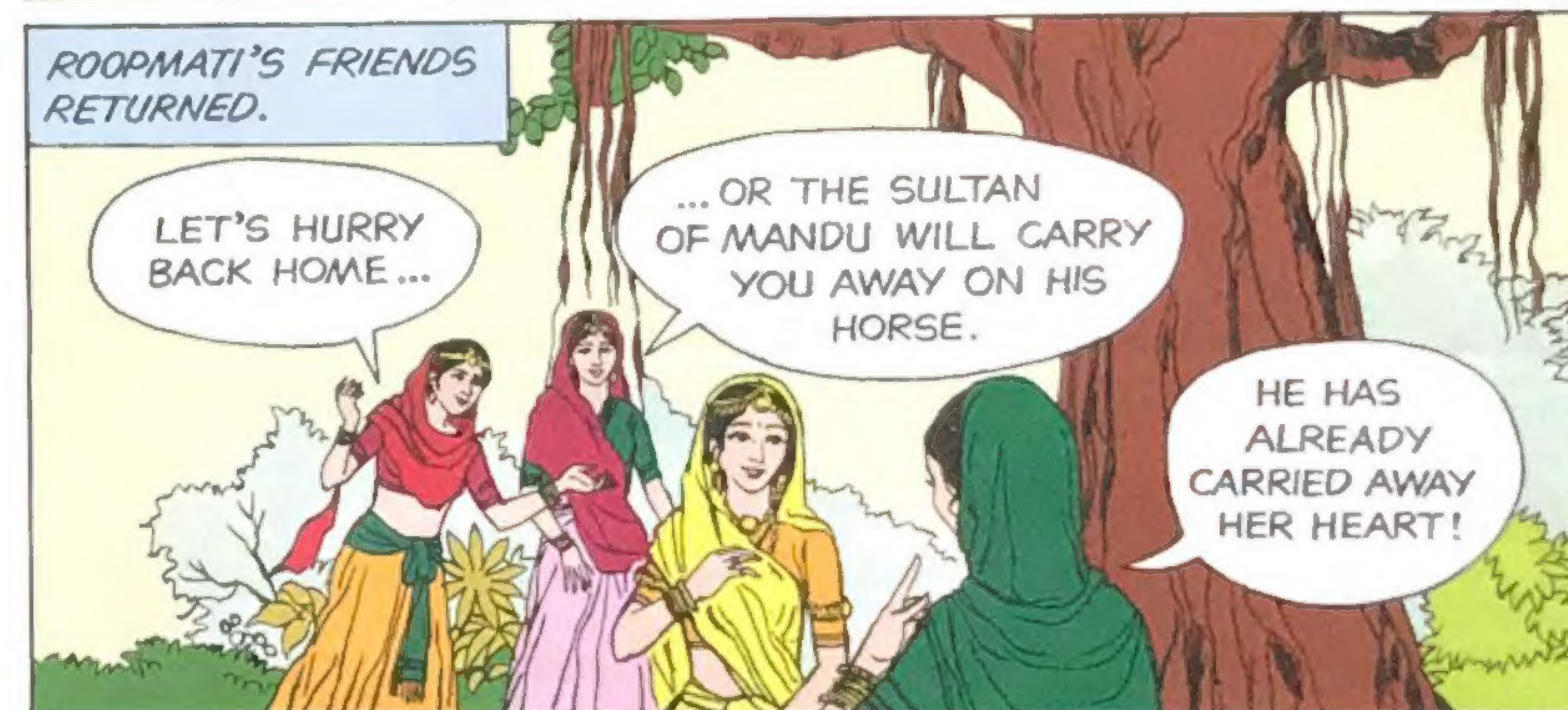
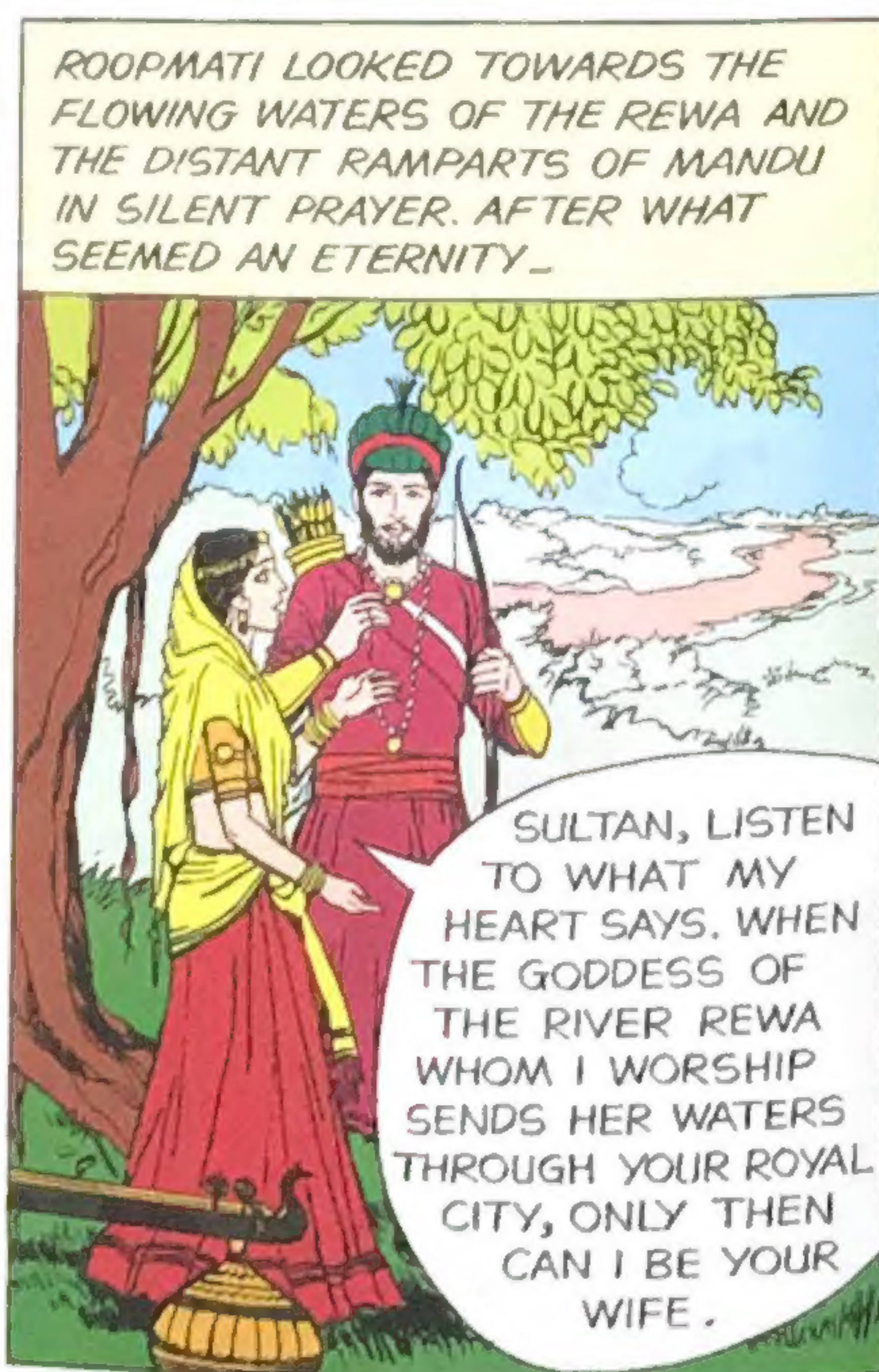
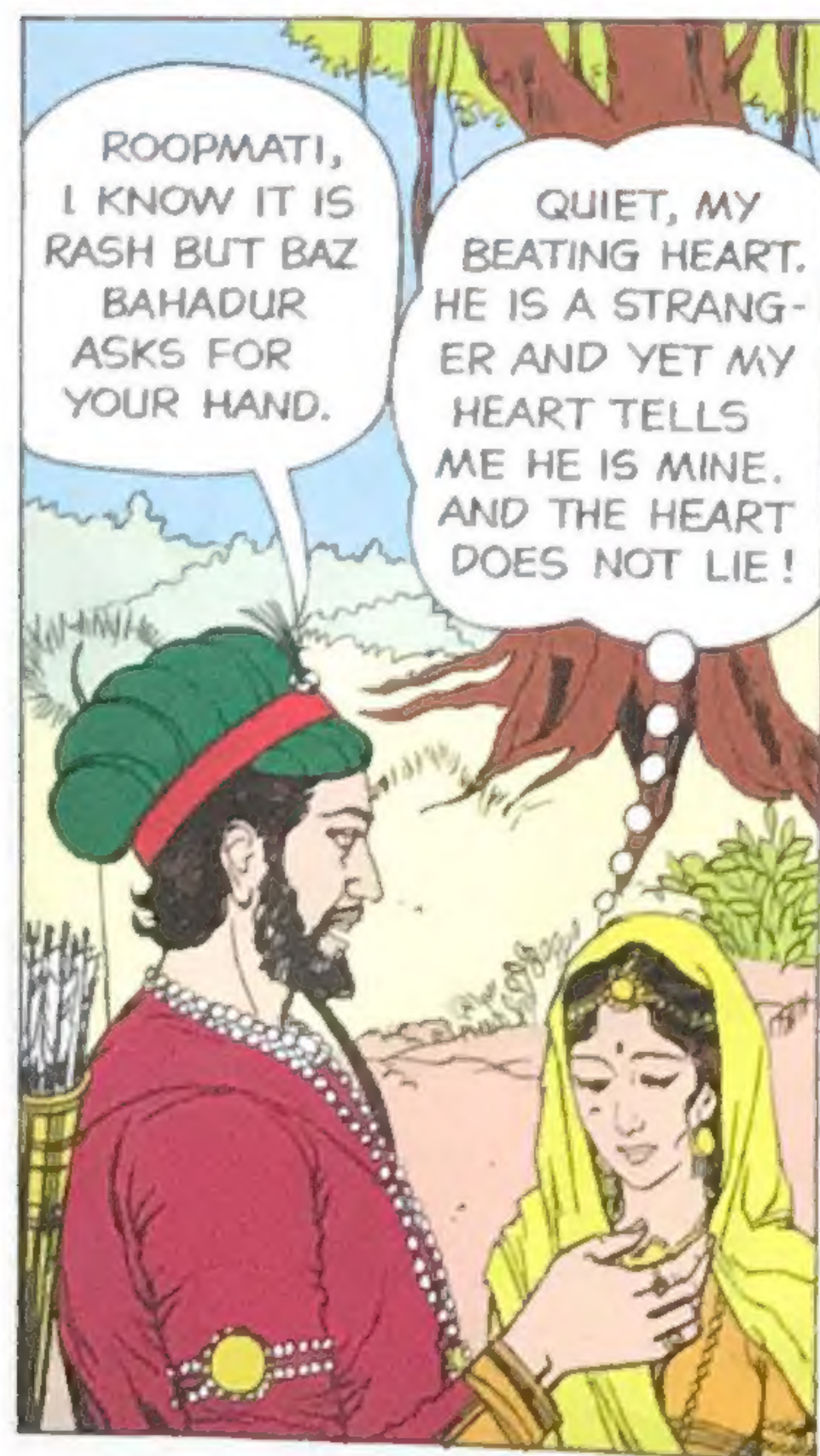
SHE IS EXCELLENT!

WHAT CHARM! AND BEAUTY! AND A FINE SINGER TOO! SUCH DEFT FINGERS ON THE BEEN! WHO COULD SHE BE?

THE SONG OVER, BAZ BAHADUR STEPPED OUT OF HIS HIDING PLACE AND FACED ROOPMATI. AT THE APPEARANCE OF THIS SUDDEN INTRUDER, HER FRIENDS SCATTERED IN FEAR, BUT ROOPMATI STOOD HER GROUND, UNAFRAID. BAZ BAHADUR ADDRESSED HER—



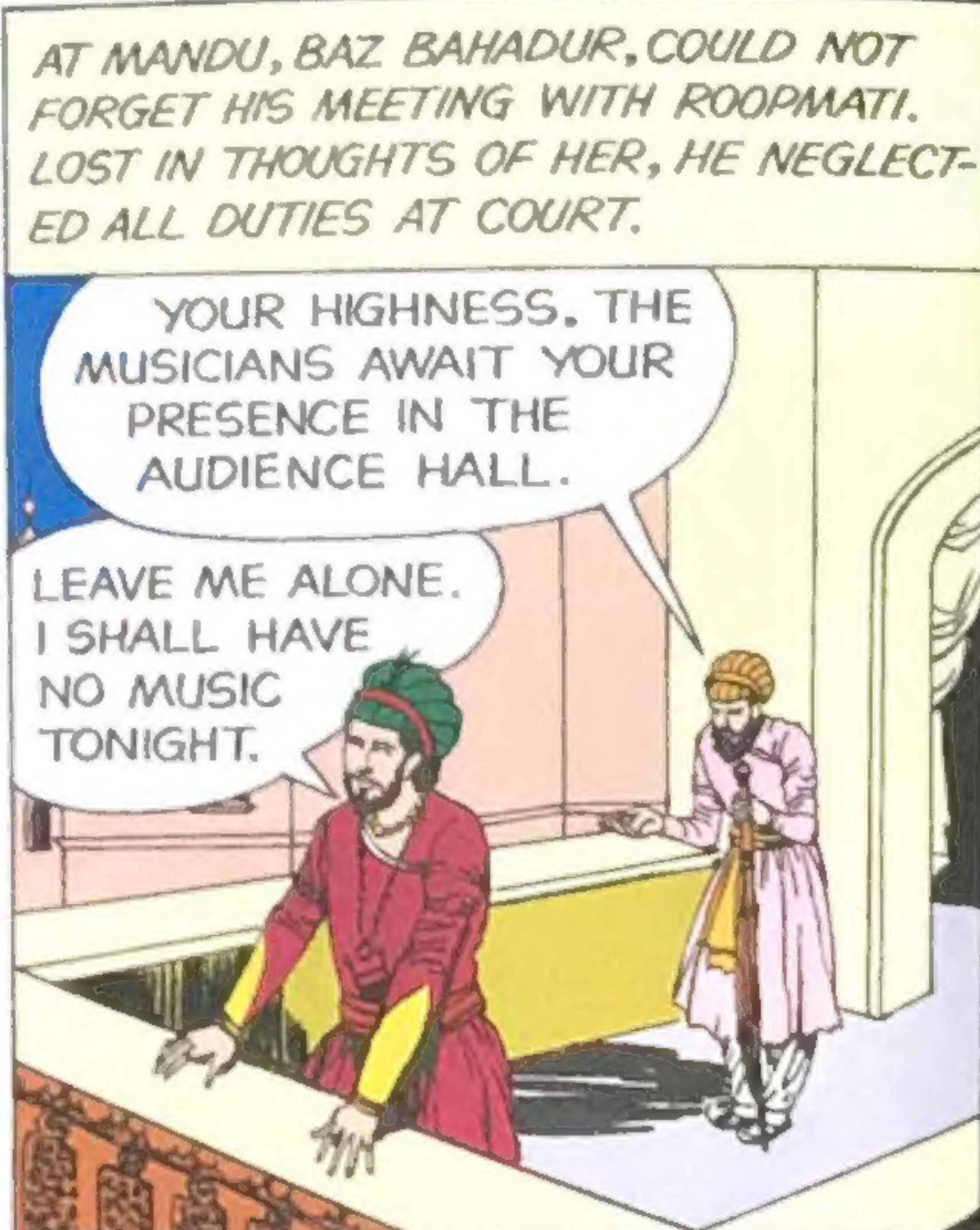
LADY, I AM A LOVER OF MUSIC. I AM AT A LOSS FOR WORDS TO PRAISE YOUR VOICE AND YOU!





WHERE TO?
THE SULTAN'S
PALACE?

HUSH...



AT MANDU, BAZ BAHADUR, COULD NOT FORGET HIS MEETING WITH ROOPMATI. LOST IN THOUGHTS OF HER, HE NEGLECTED ALL DUTIES AT COURT.

YOUR HIGHNESS, THE MUSICIANS AWAIT YOUR PRESENCE IN THE AUDIENCE HALL.

LEAVE ME ALONE. I SHALL HAVE NO MUSIC TONIGHT.



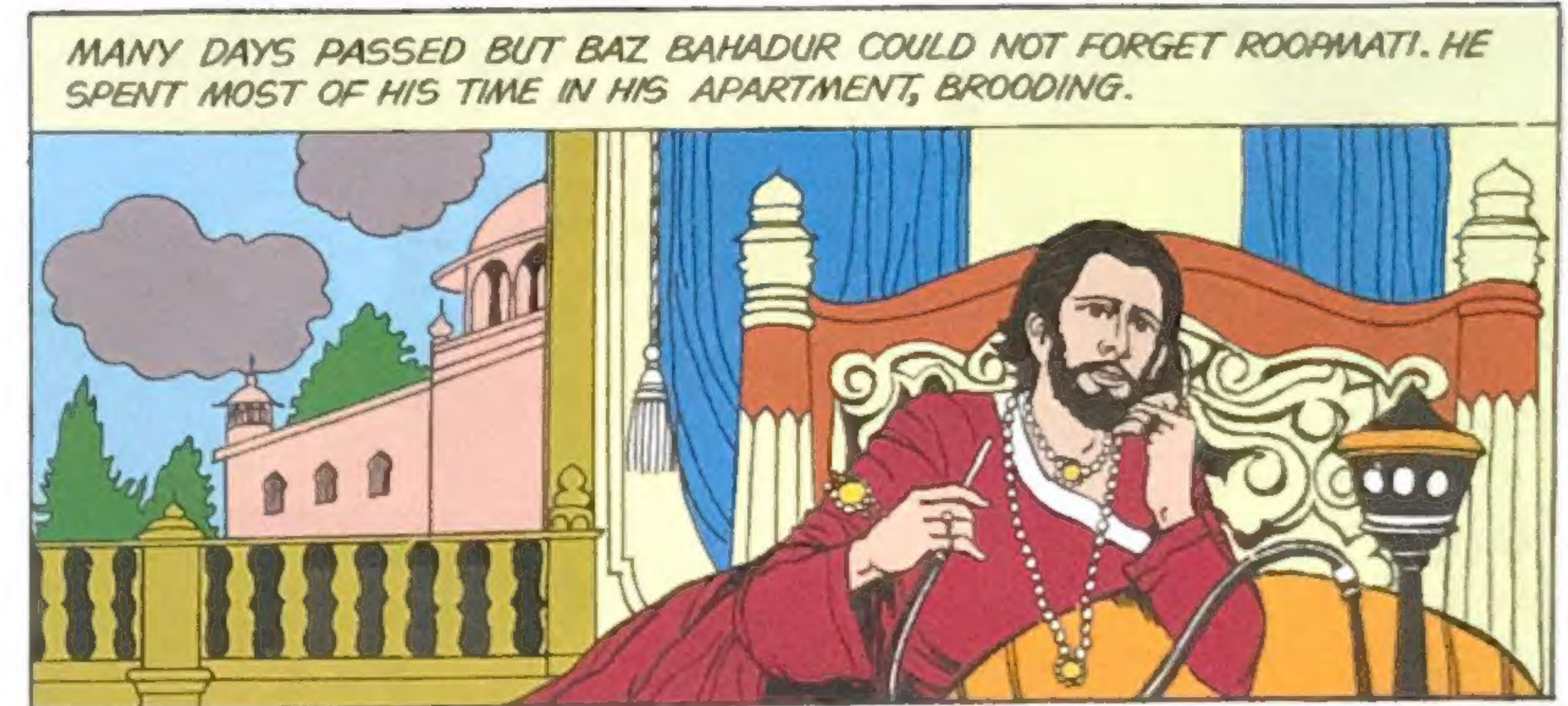
IN THE DARBAR HALL -

WHAT? NO MUSIC TONIGHT! THE SULTAN IS A CHANGED MAN!

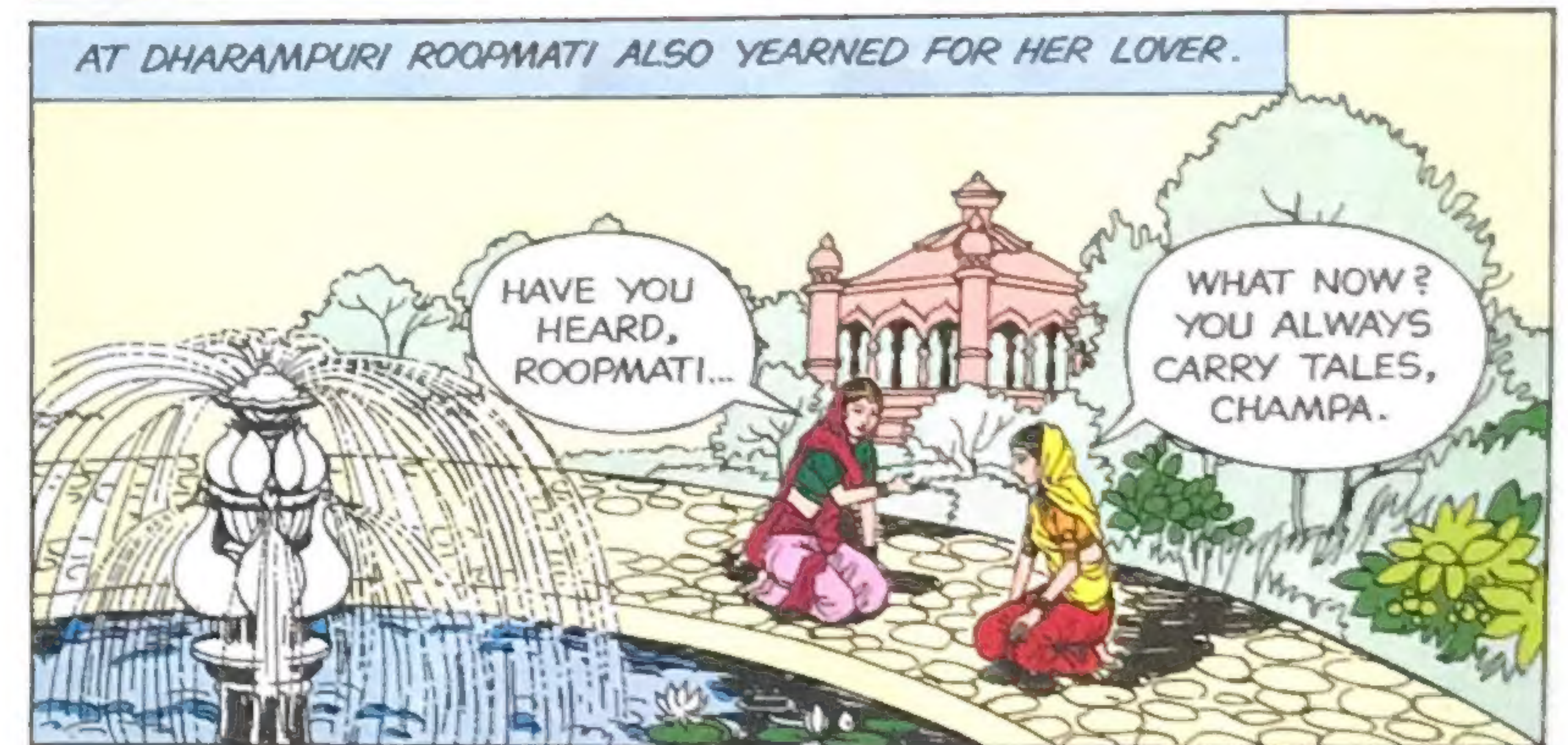
WITHOUT MUSIC AND DANCE, MANDU WILL BE CHANGED TOO!



THE SULTAN IS NOT WELL. TODAY'S HUNT WAS TIRING, AND HE SEEKS REST.



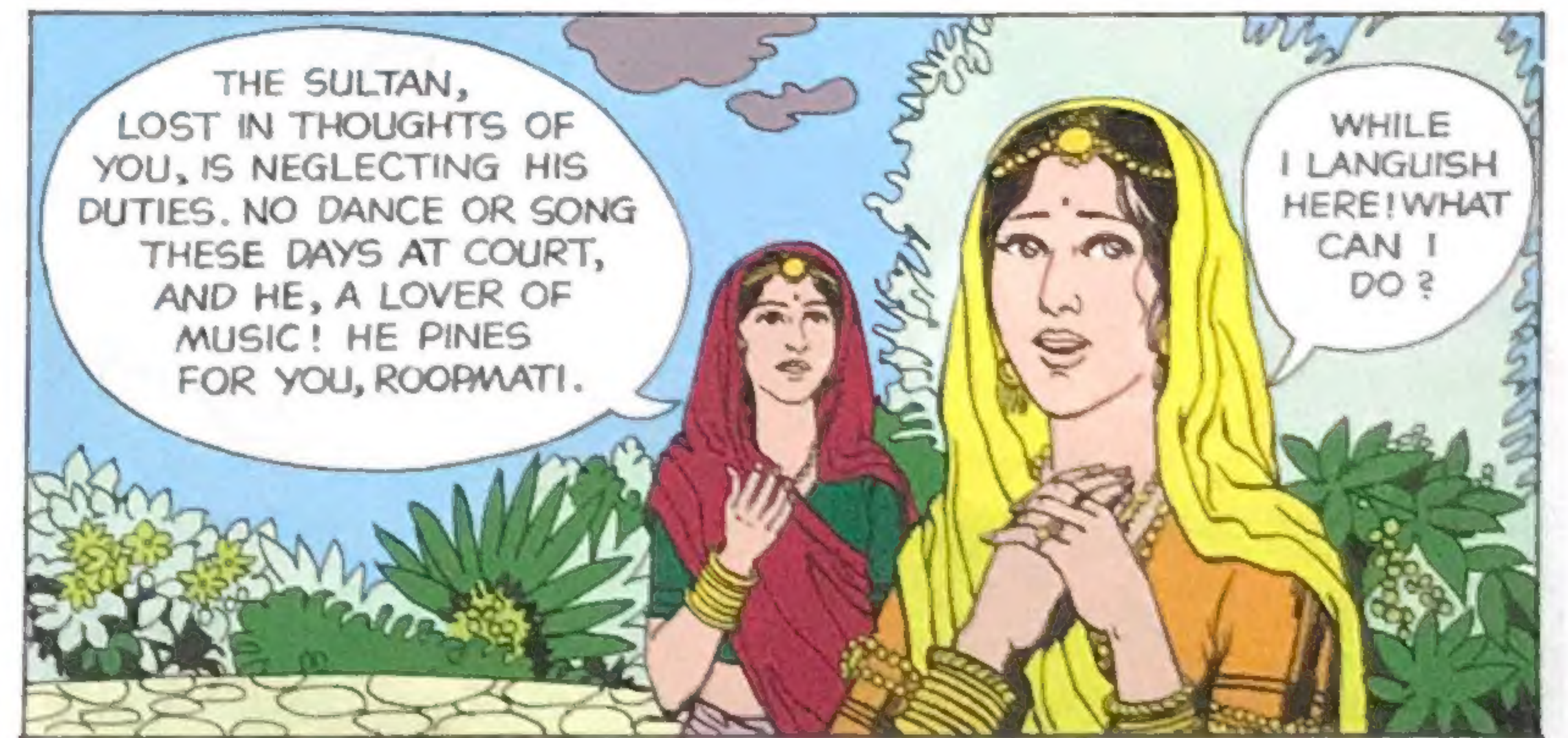
MANY DAYS PASSED BUT BAZ BAHADUR COULD NOT FORGET ROOPMATI. HE SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME IN HIS APARTMENT, BROODING.



AT DHARAMPURI ROOPMATI ALSO YEARNED FOR HER LOVER.

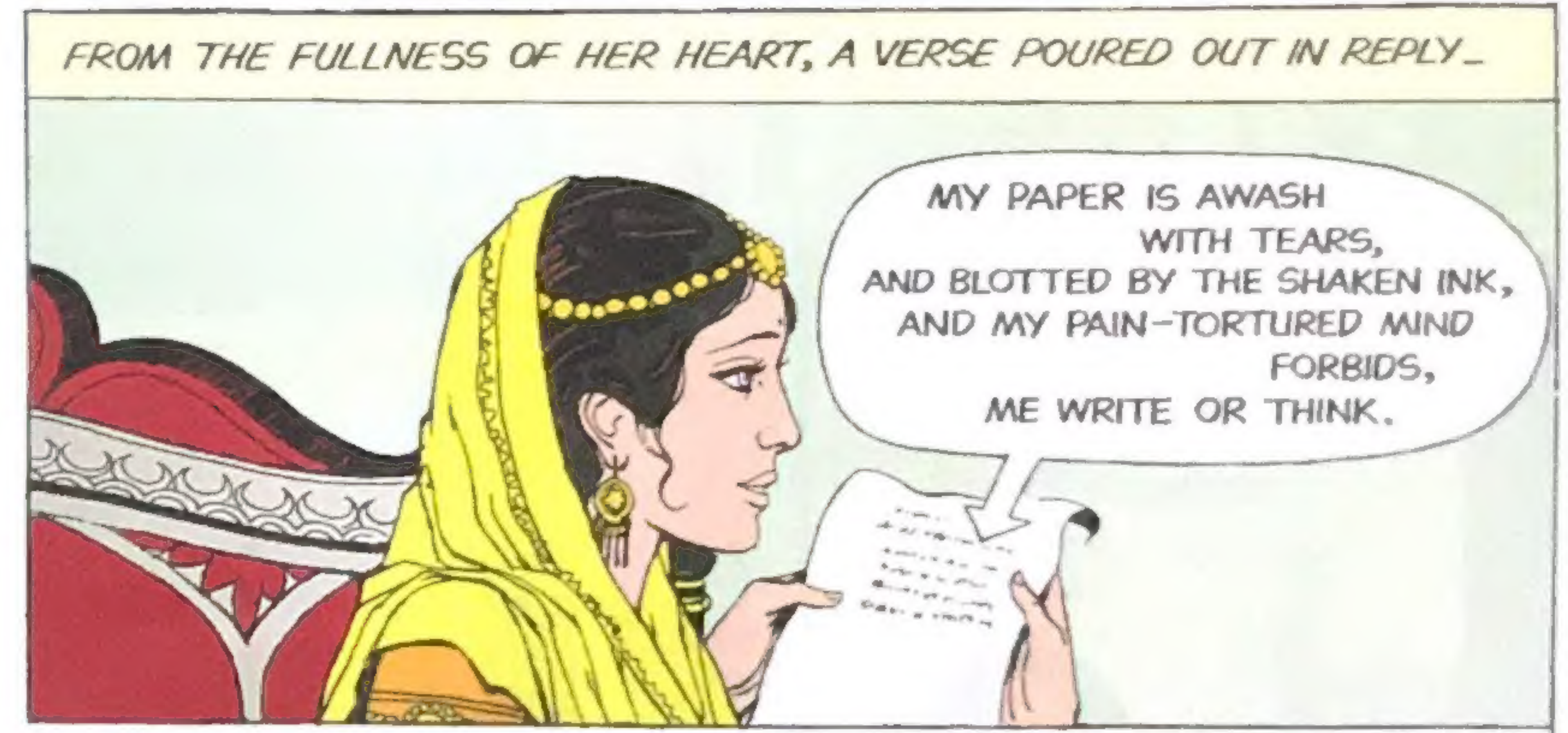
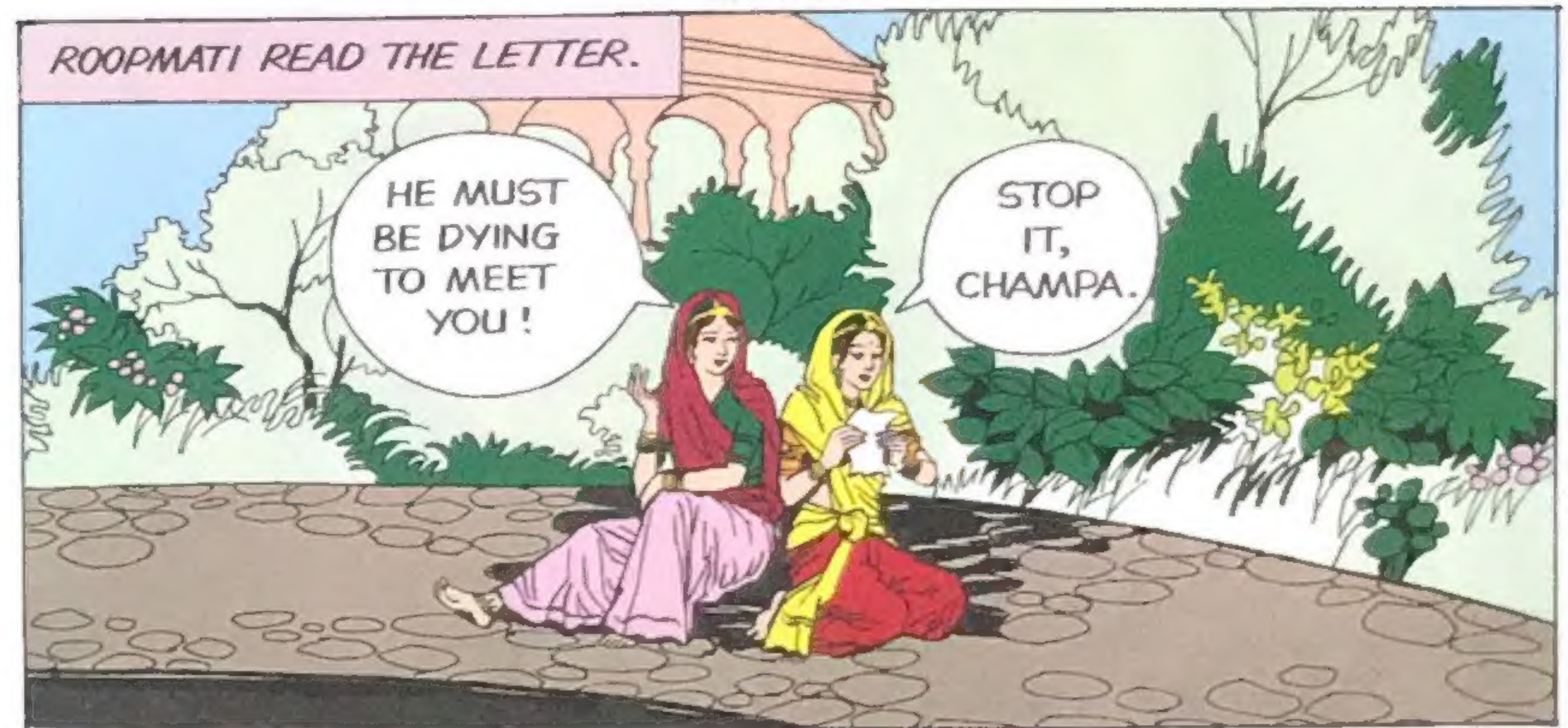
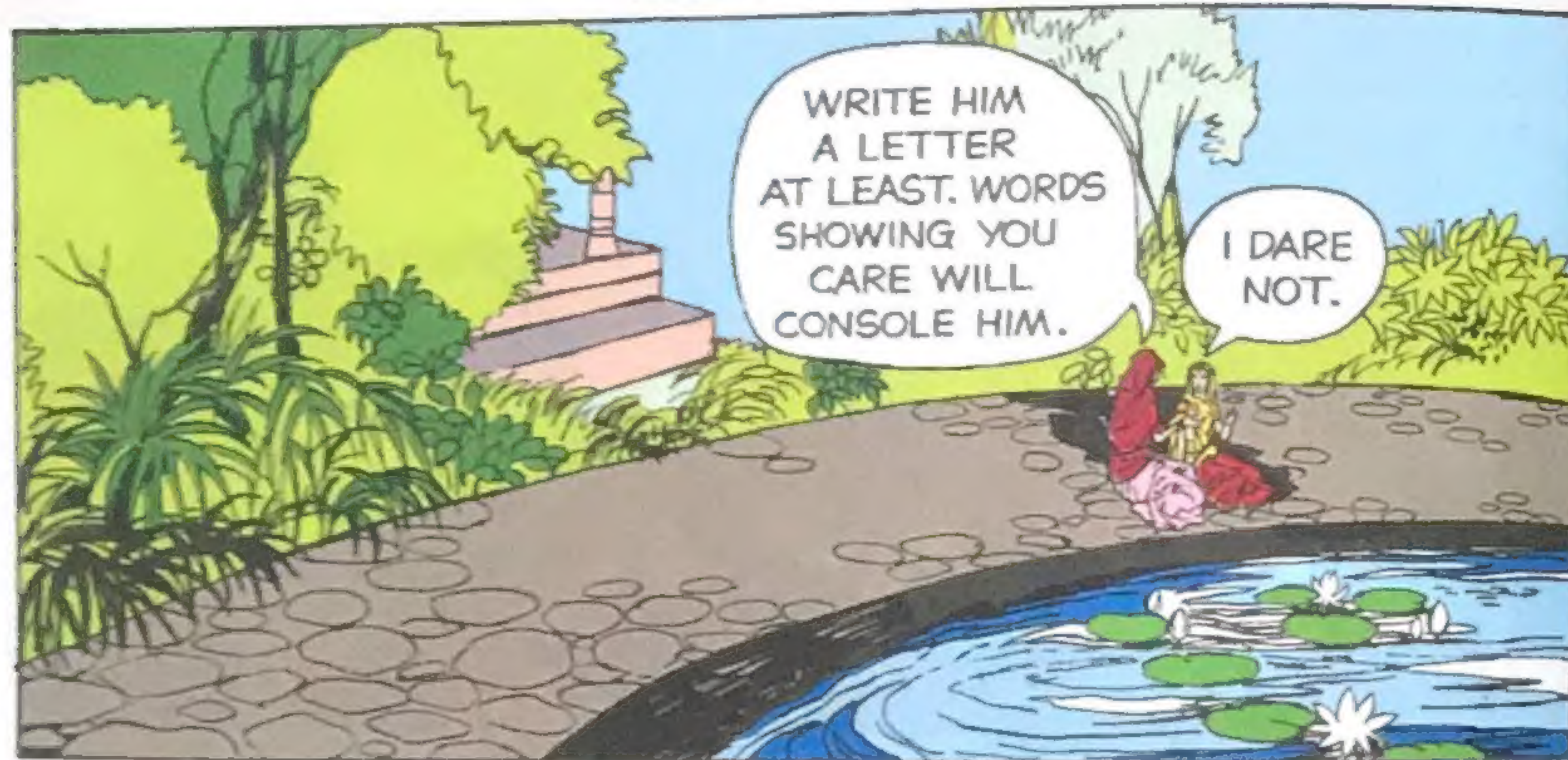
HAVE YOU HEARD, ROOPMATI...

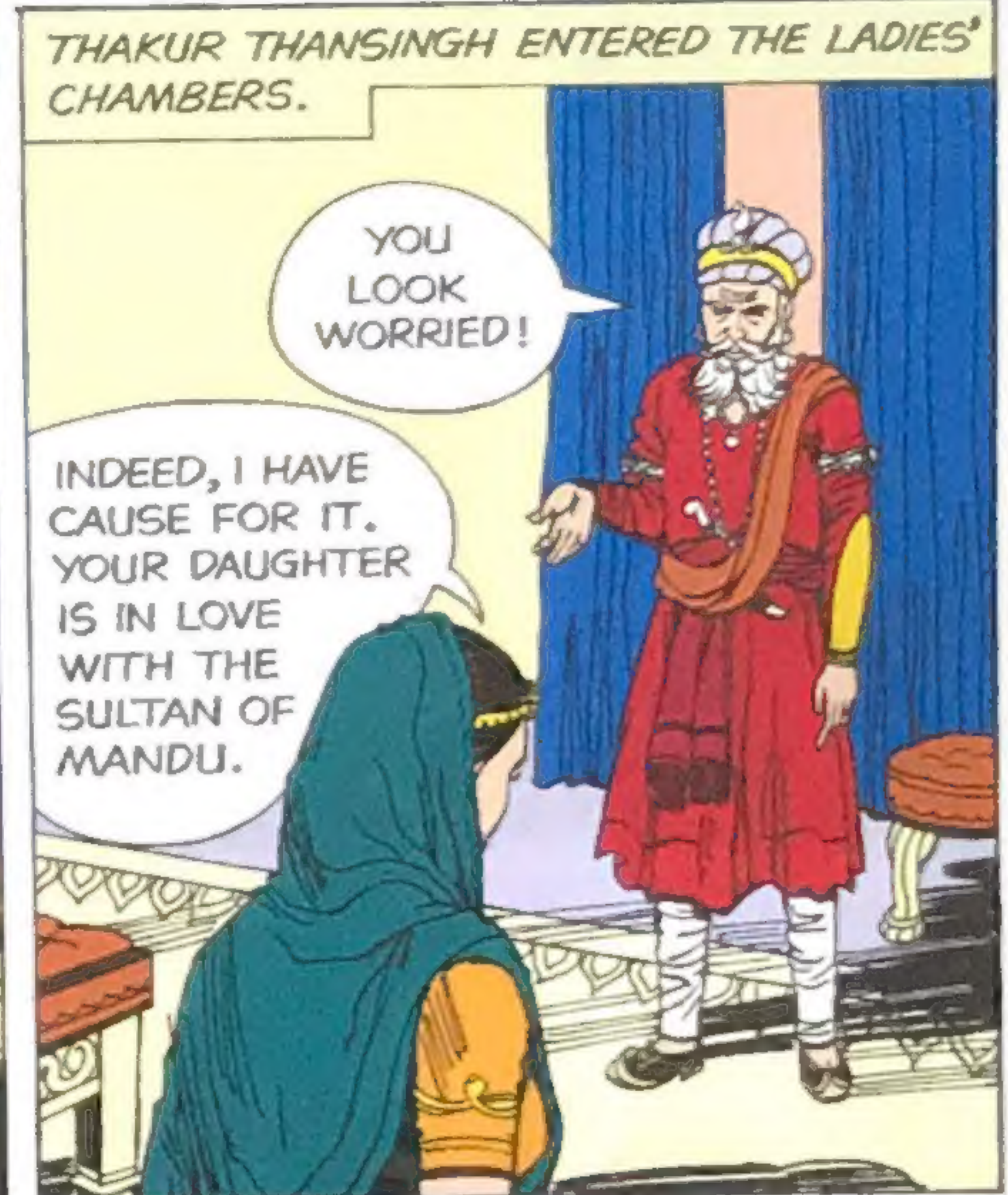
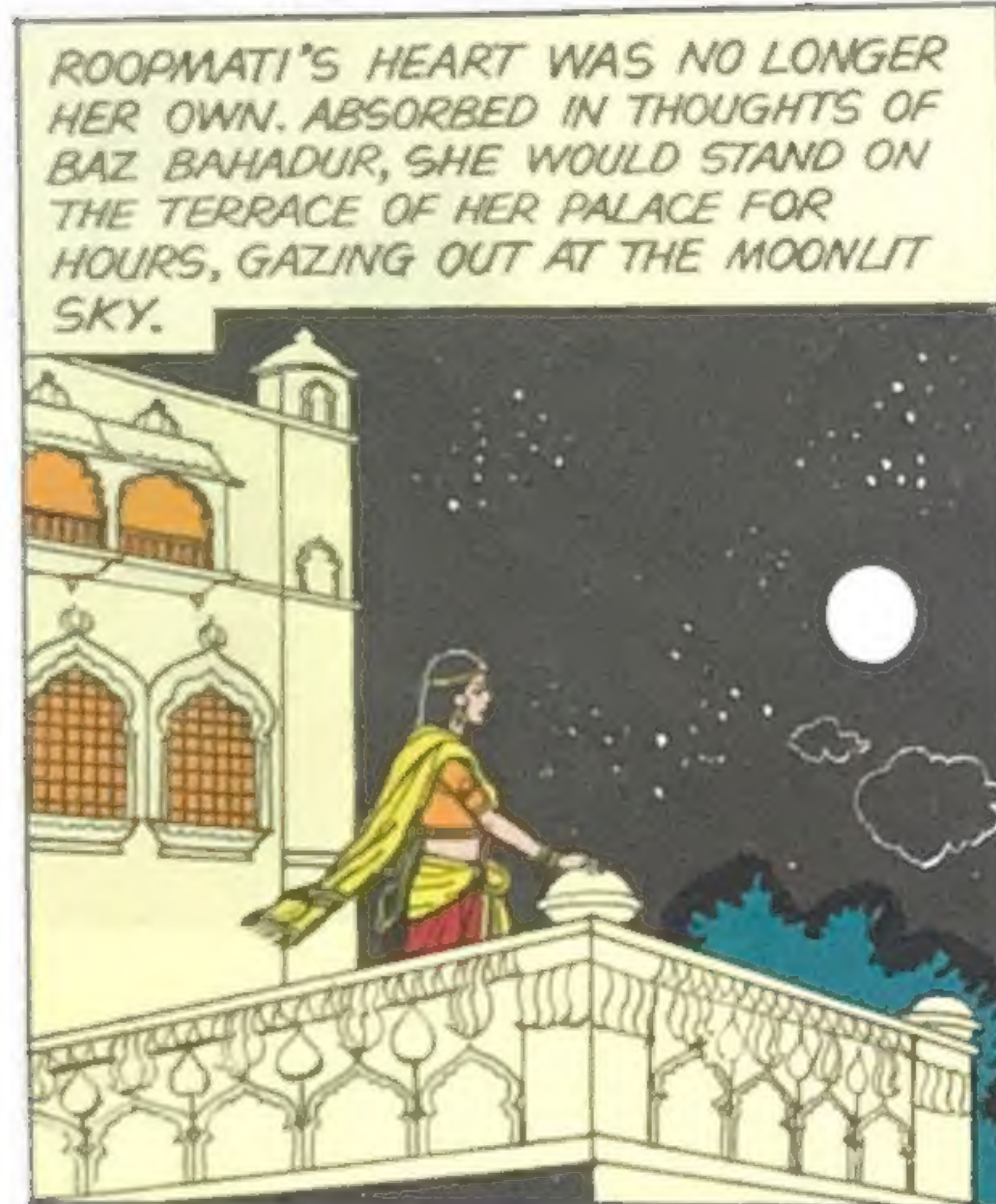
WHAT NOW? YOU ALWAYS CARRY TALES, CHAMPA.



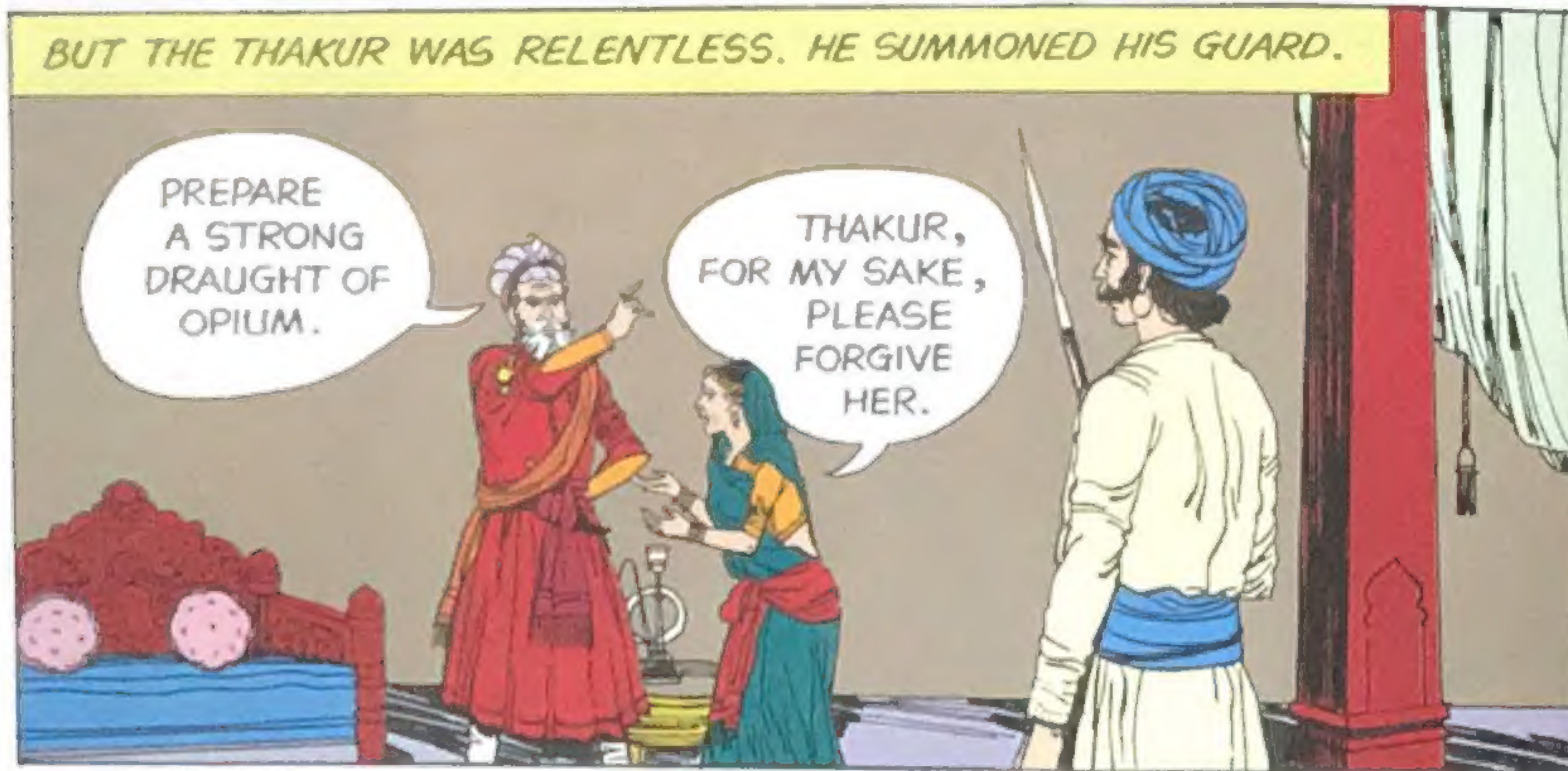
THE SULTAN, LOST IN THOUGHTS OF YOU, IS NEGLECTING HIS DUTIES. NO DANCE OR SONG THESE DAYS AT COURT, AND HE, A LOVER OF MUSIC! HE PINES FOR YOU, ROOPMATI.

WHILE I LANGUISH HERE! WHAT CAN I DO?





BUT THE THAKUR WAS RELENTLESS. HE SUMMONED HIS GUARD.



THE THAKUR STORMED OUT OF THE ROOM IN A MIGHTY TEMPER AND—



THE PRIEST ARRIVED AT THE THAKUR'S PARLOUR AND TRIED TO MEDIATE.



WHEN REASONING FAILED TO CHANGE THE THAKUR'S MIND, THE PRIEST TOOK RECOURSE TO RELIGIOUS PRETEXT.

DON'T DEFILE THIS SPRING FESTIVAL BY SACRIFICING THE FAIREST OF ITS FLOWERS.

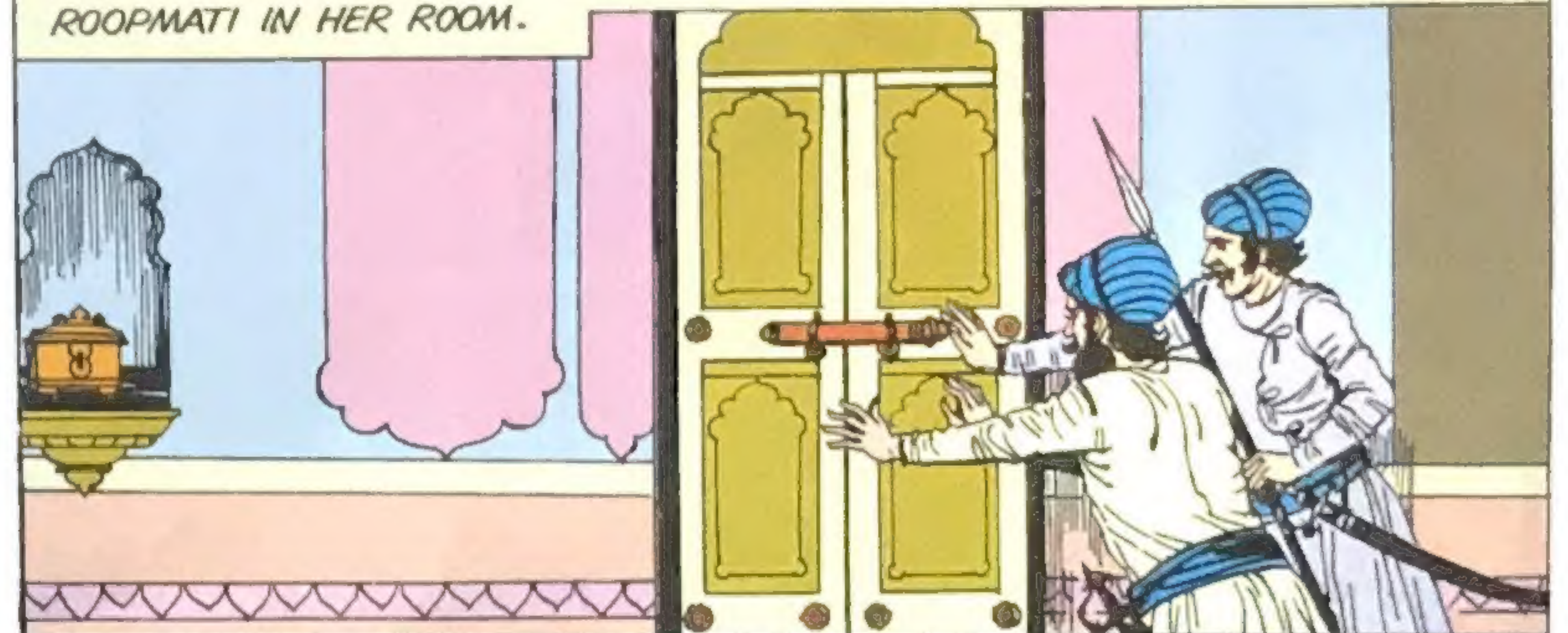


THE RUSE WORKED.

WHAT SHOULD I DO? IMPRISON ROOPMATI? I SHALL THINK IT OVER TONIGHT.



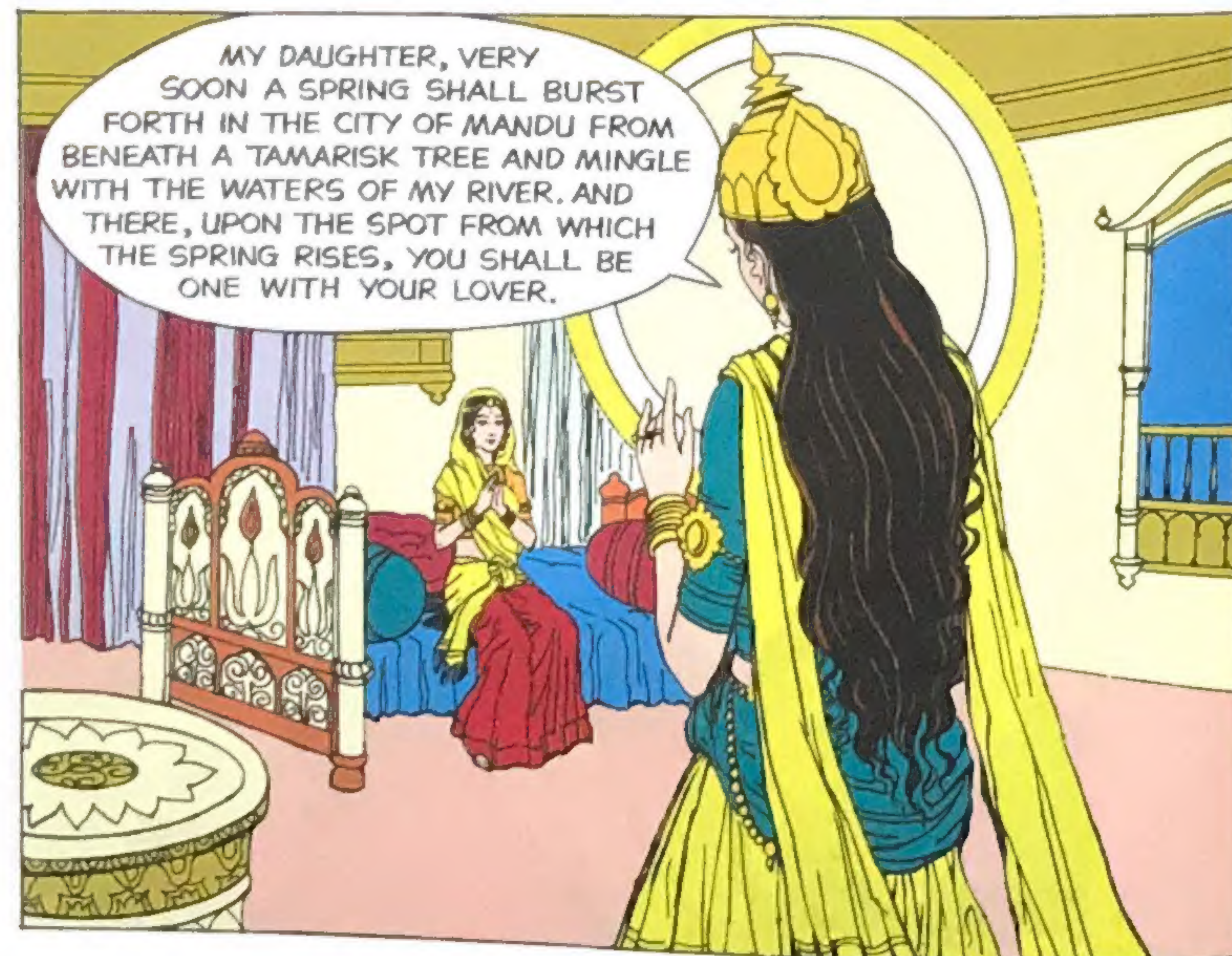
THE VERY NEXT DAY, AT THE THAKUR'S ORDERS, TWO GUARDS IMPRISONED ROOPMATI IN HER ROOM.



LOCKED UP IN HER ROOM, ROOPMATI SOBBED HERSELF INTO AN UNEASY SLUMBER.



SUDDENLY, SHE WAS AWAKE. A DAZZLING LIGHT PERVADED THE ROOM AND A RADIANT WOMAN PUT HER HAND LOVINGLY ON ROOPMATI'S SHOULDER.



THE GODDESS DEPARTED AND ROOPMATI ONCE AGAIN RETURNED TO SLEEP.



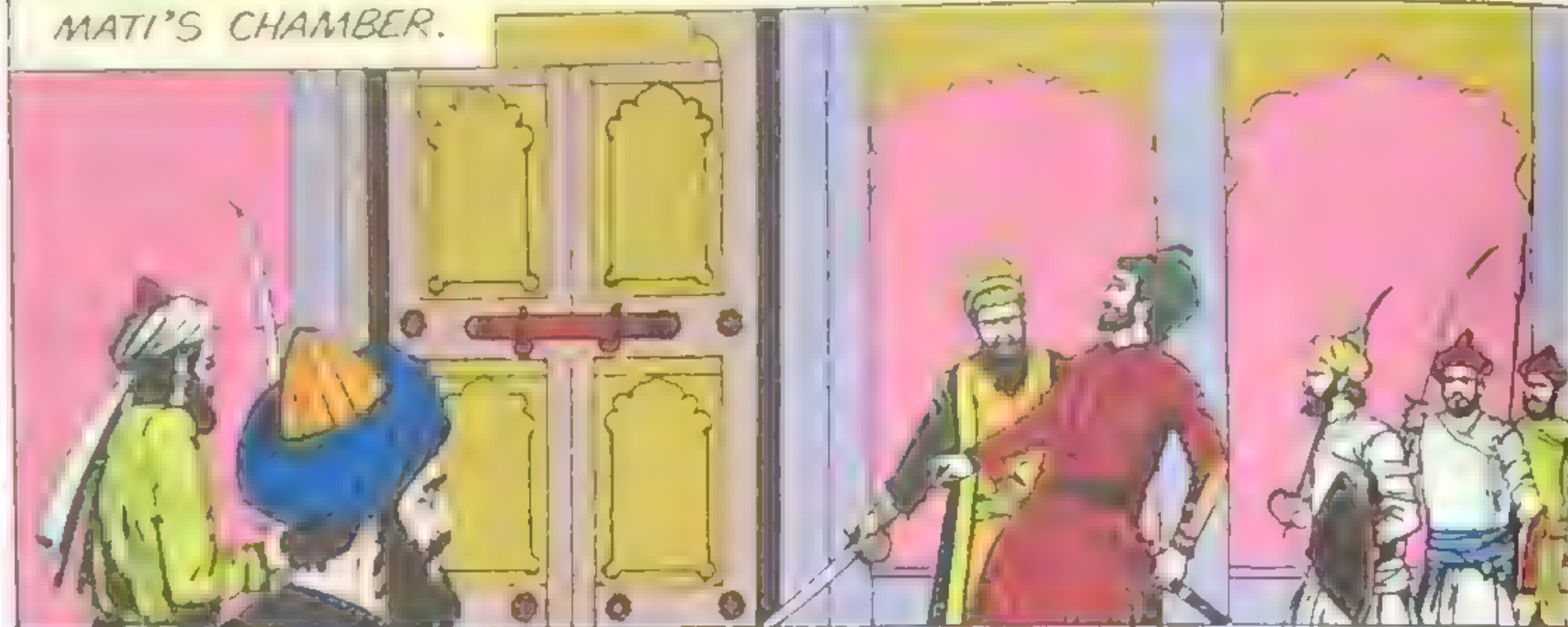
AT MANDU, BAZ BAHADUR, ON HEARING ABOUT ROOPMATI'S IMPRISONMENT, DECIDED TO MARCH ON THE RAJPUT STRONGHOLD OF DHARAMPURI.



IN THE PRE-DAWN ENCOUNTER, THE RAJPUTS WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE.



BAZ BAHADUR WON THE BATTLE AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS ROOPMATI'S CHAMBER.



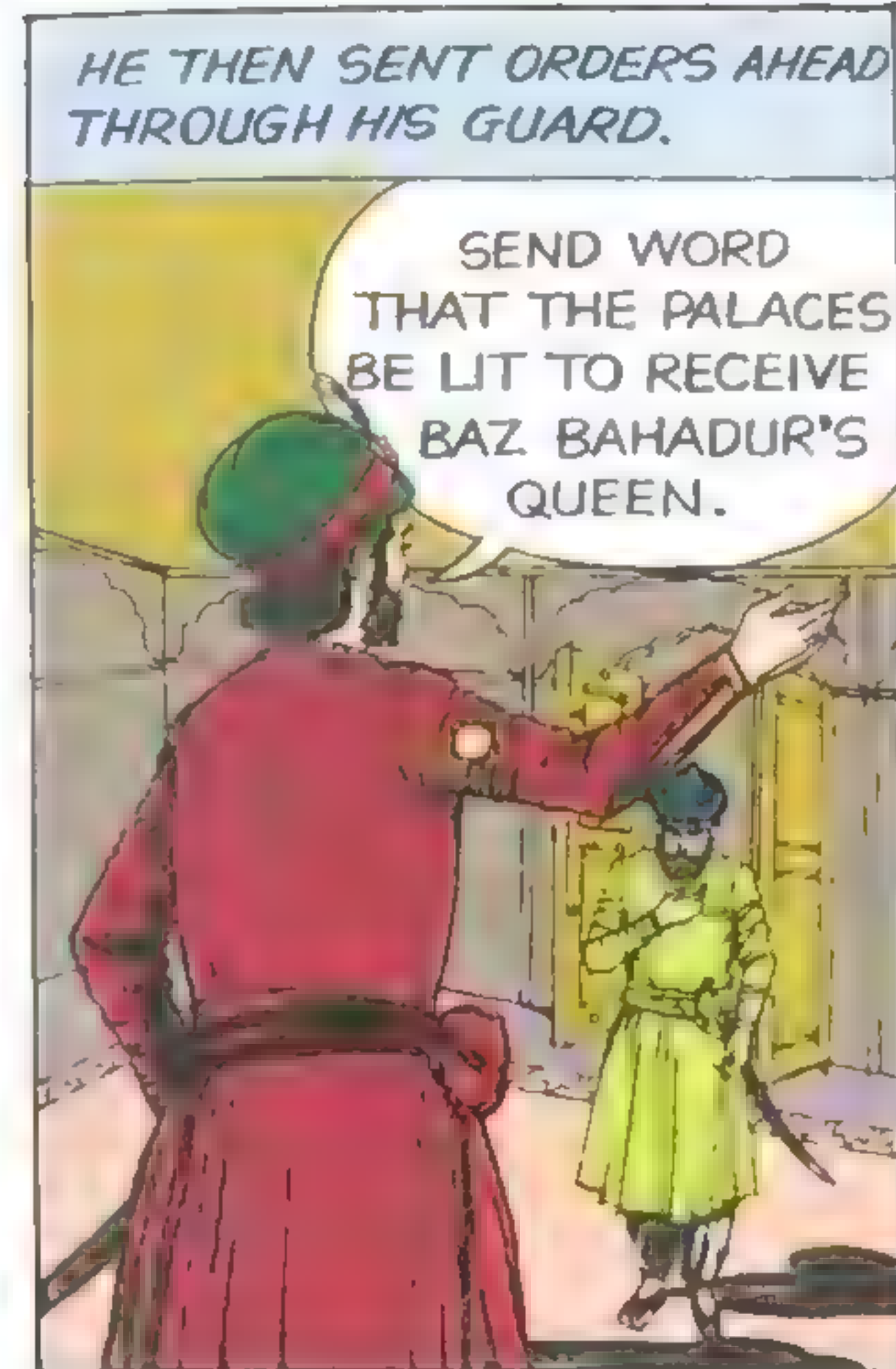
ROOPMATI WAS FREED.



BAZ BAHADUR DID NOT TAKE DHARAMPURI. HE RELEASED THE THAKUR.



HE THEN SENT ORDERS AHEAD THROUGH HIS GUARD.



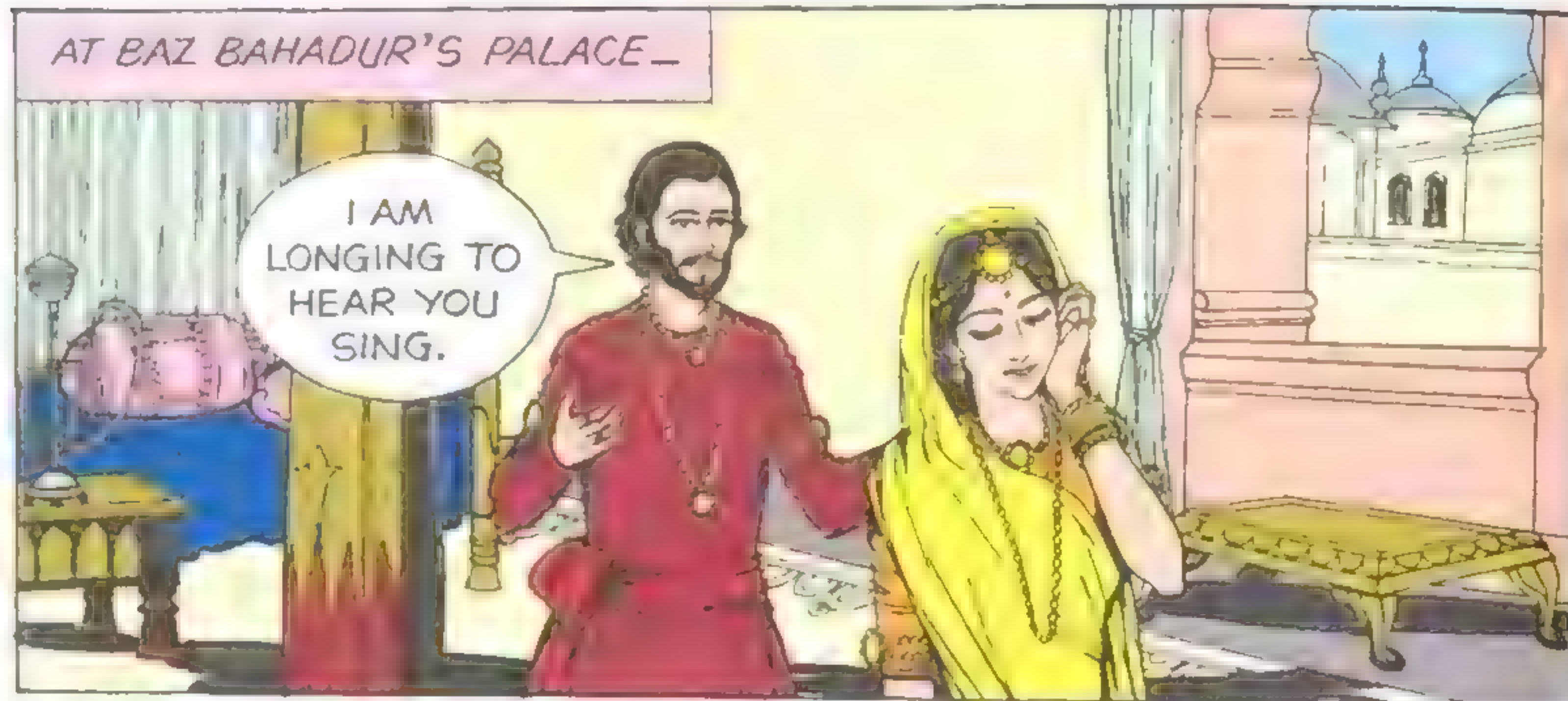
ROOPMATI RODE ALONGSIDE BAZ BAHADUR, FOLLOWED BY THE ROYAL ENTOURAGE.



WITH GREAT REGALIA, THE ROYAL COUPLE WAS RECEIVED AT MANDU.



AT BAZ BAHADUR'S PALACE...



ROOPMATI SANG, AND BAZ BAHADUR LISTENED WITH RAPT ATTENTION.

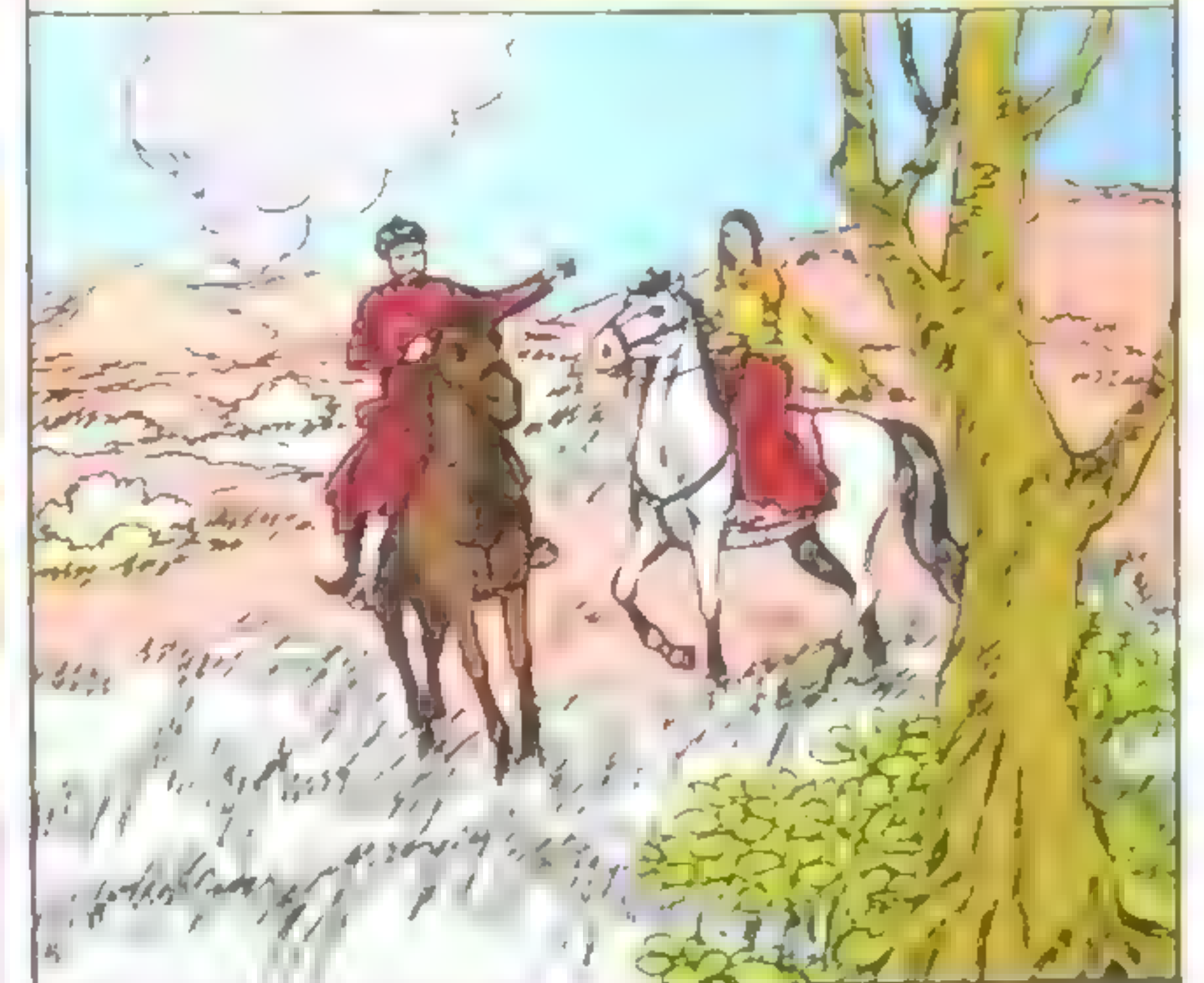


ROOPMATI TOLD HIM ABOUT HER MIDNIGHT VISION.

TOMORROW WE SHALL RIDE TO THE VALLEY OF THE REWA AND LOOK FOR THAT SPRING THE GODDESS MENTIONED.



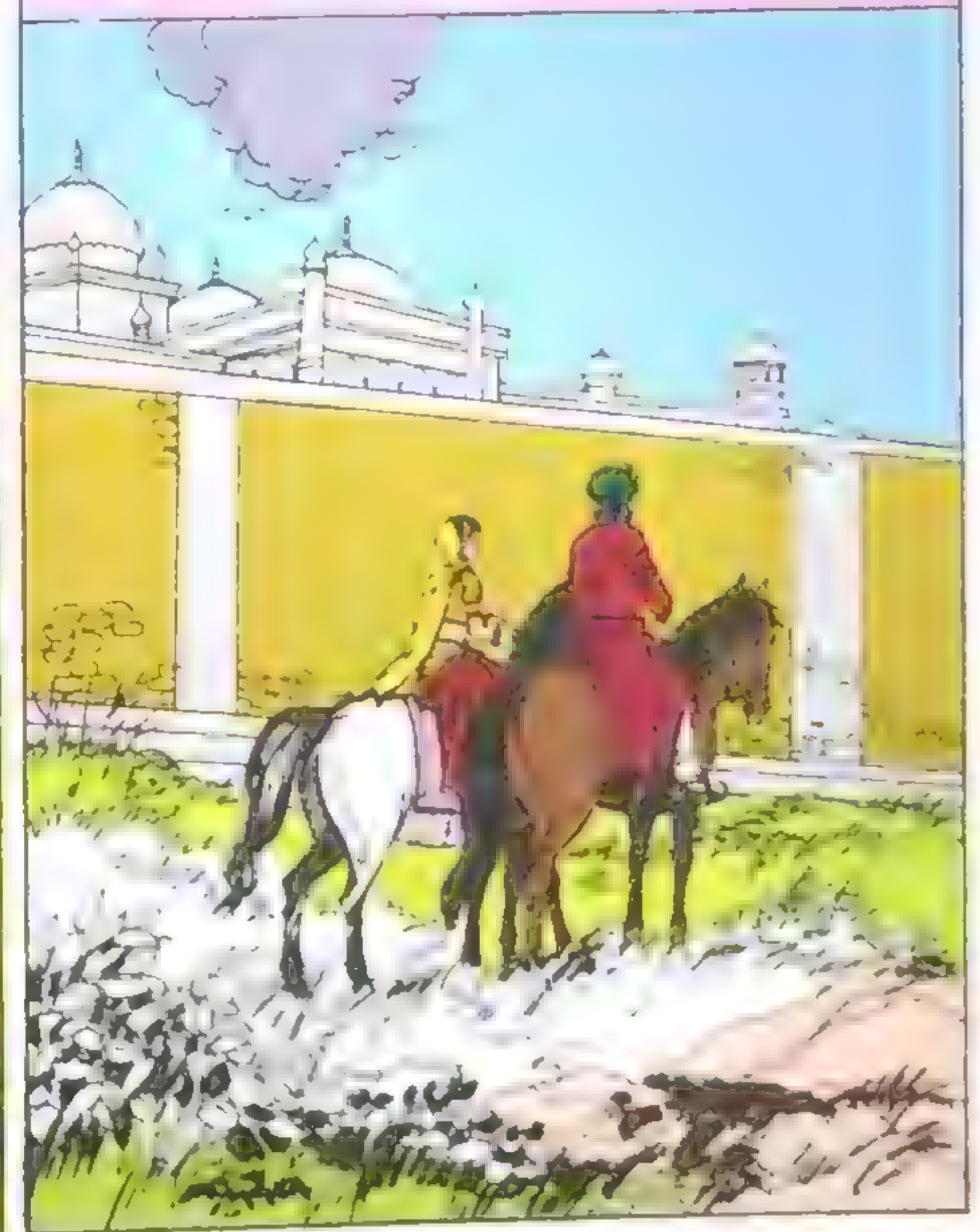
THE NEXT DAY ROOPMATI AND BAZ BAHADUR RODE THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE REWA...



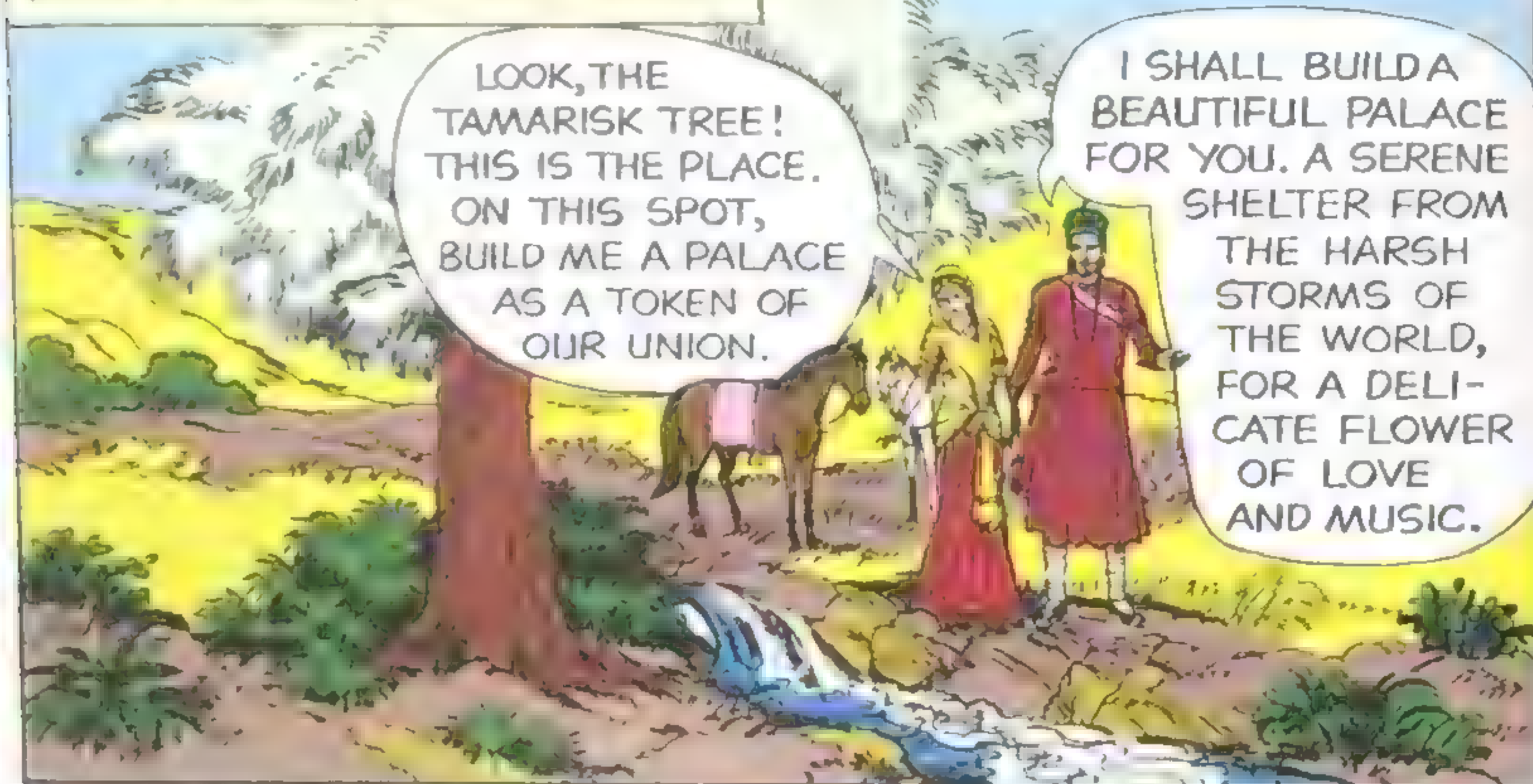
...UP THE GRASSY SLOPES...



...PAST THE WHITE MAUSOLEUM OF HOSHANG SHAH, ALONG THE WALLS OF THE GREAT MOSQUE.



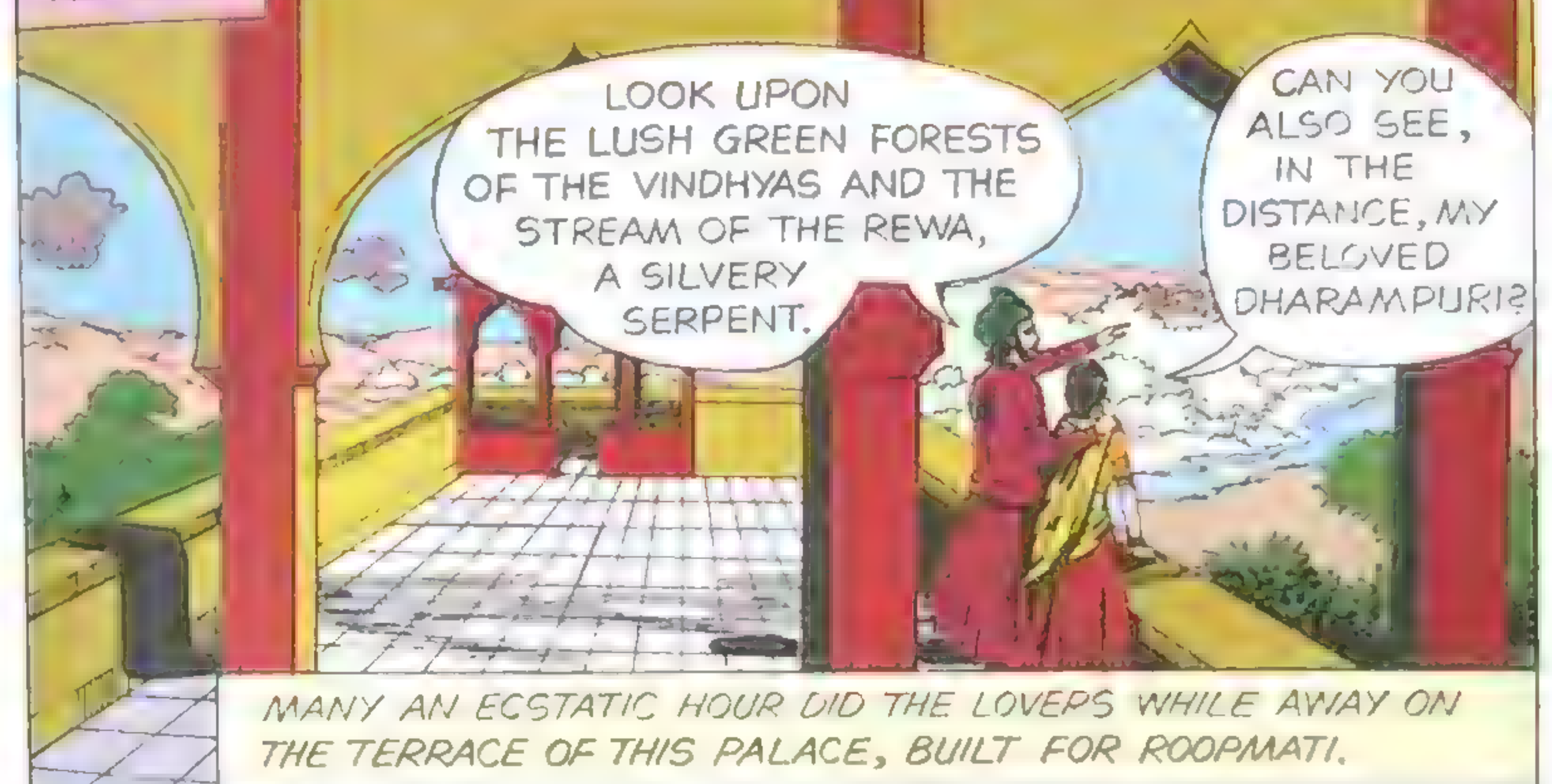
THEY REACHED A SHELTERED VALLEY IN THE HILLS, AND THERE BENEATH THE TAMARISK TREE, JUST AS THE GODDESS HAD PROMISED, GUSHED FORTH A SPRING OF PURE WATER.



ON THAT SPOT BAZ BAHADUR BUILT A PALACE AS DESIRED BY ROOPMATI.



WHEN IT WAS READY, HE TOOK ROOPMATI TO THE TERRACE OF THE PALACE.



WHENEVER BAZ BAHADUR WAS BUSY WITH COURT AFFAIRS, ROOPMATI SAT ON THE TERRACE LOOKING AT DISTANT DHARAMPURI, WHERE THE TEMPLE PRIEST LIT A GREAT LAMP AT TWILIGHT, SENDING ROOPMATI INTO A TRANCE, COMPOSING VERSES OF SEPARATION FROM THE PLACE OF HER BIRTH.



BAZ BAHADUR WAS NEVER TOO LONG AWAY FROM HER.



YOUR SONGS PIERCE MY HEART! YOUR VERSES ENCHANT ME! WITHOUT ROOPMATI, BAZ BAHADUR IS A CORPSE.

DO NOT SHOWER SUCH PRAISES UPON ME. I AM ONLY ROOPMATI, BAZ BAHADUR'S DEVOTEE.

BUT THE PEACE AND JOY OF MANDU WERE SHORT-LIVED. AKBAR HAD ASCENDED THE THRONE OF THE MUGHALS AND HE WAS CONSOLIDATING HIS EMPIRE. MANDU ATTRACTED HIS ATTENTION.

ADHAM KHAN, TAKE YOUR FORCES AND MARCH UPON THE DISTRICTS OF MALWA. THE AFGHAN WHO RULES THERE IRKS ME.

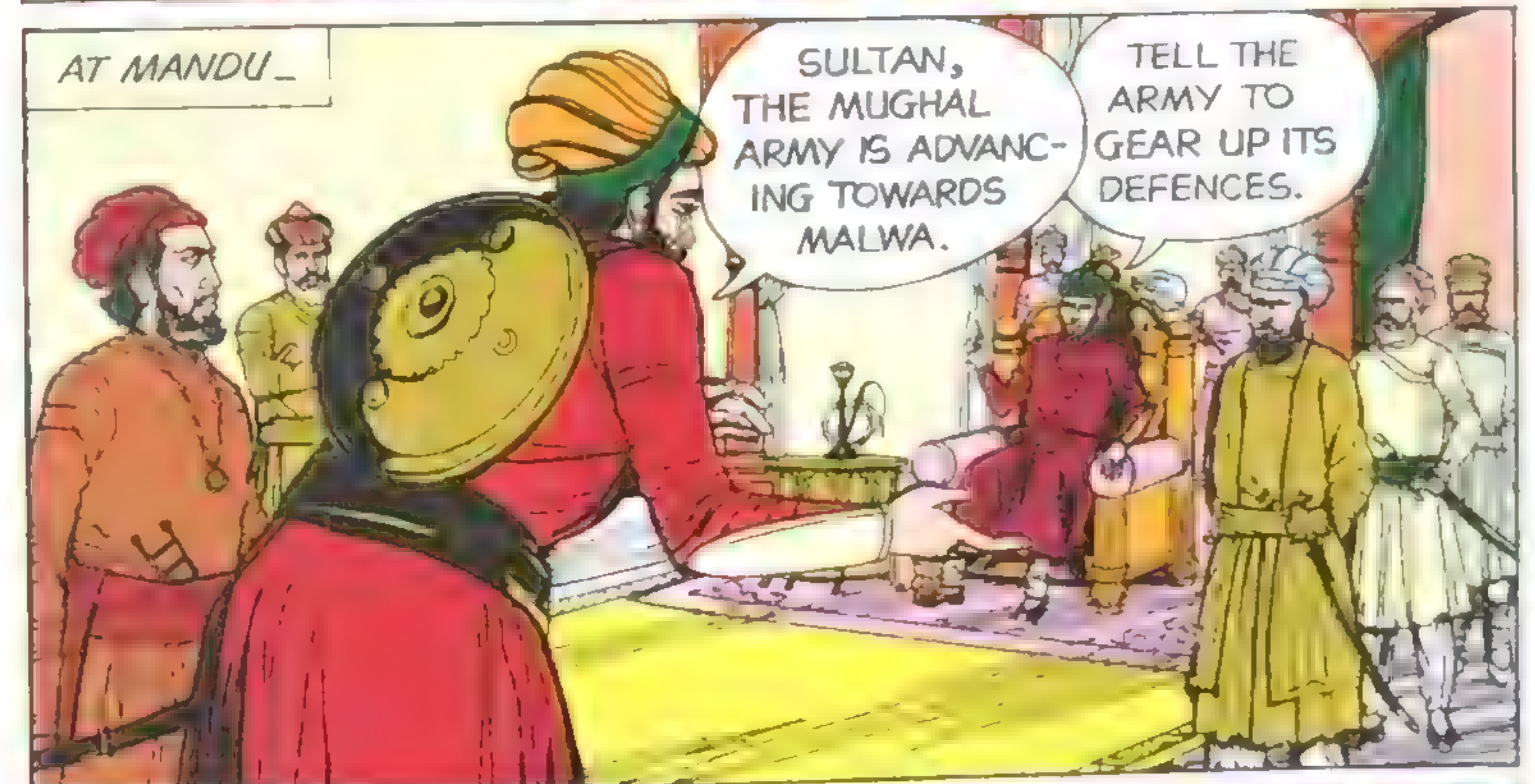


I LEAVE AT ONCE, YOUR MAJESTY!

ADHAM KHAN SET OUT WITH HIS ARMY.



AT MANDU -



SULTAN, THE MUGHAL ARMY IS ADVANCING TOWARDS MALWA.

TELL THE ARMY TO GEAR UP ITS DEFENCES.

AT ROOPMATI'S PALACE -

THE MUGHAL ARMY IS CLOSING IN ON MANDU. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS?



I'LL FACE THEM WHEN THEY ARRIVE.



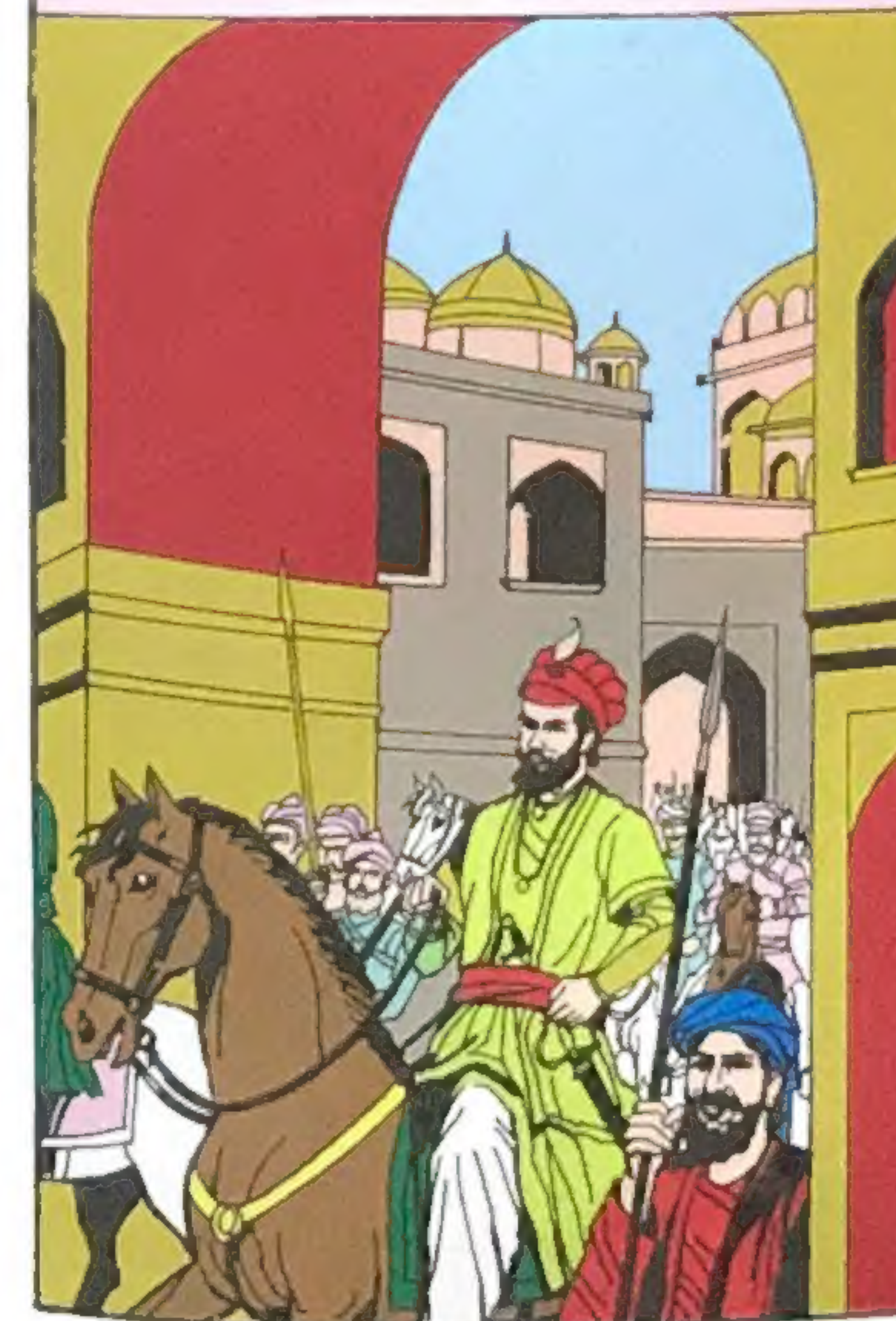
WHEN BAZ BAHADUR WAS READY, ROOPMATI APPLIED THE TILAK ON BAZ BAHADUR'S FOREHEAD.



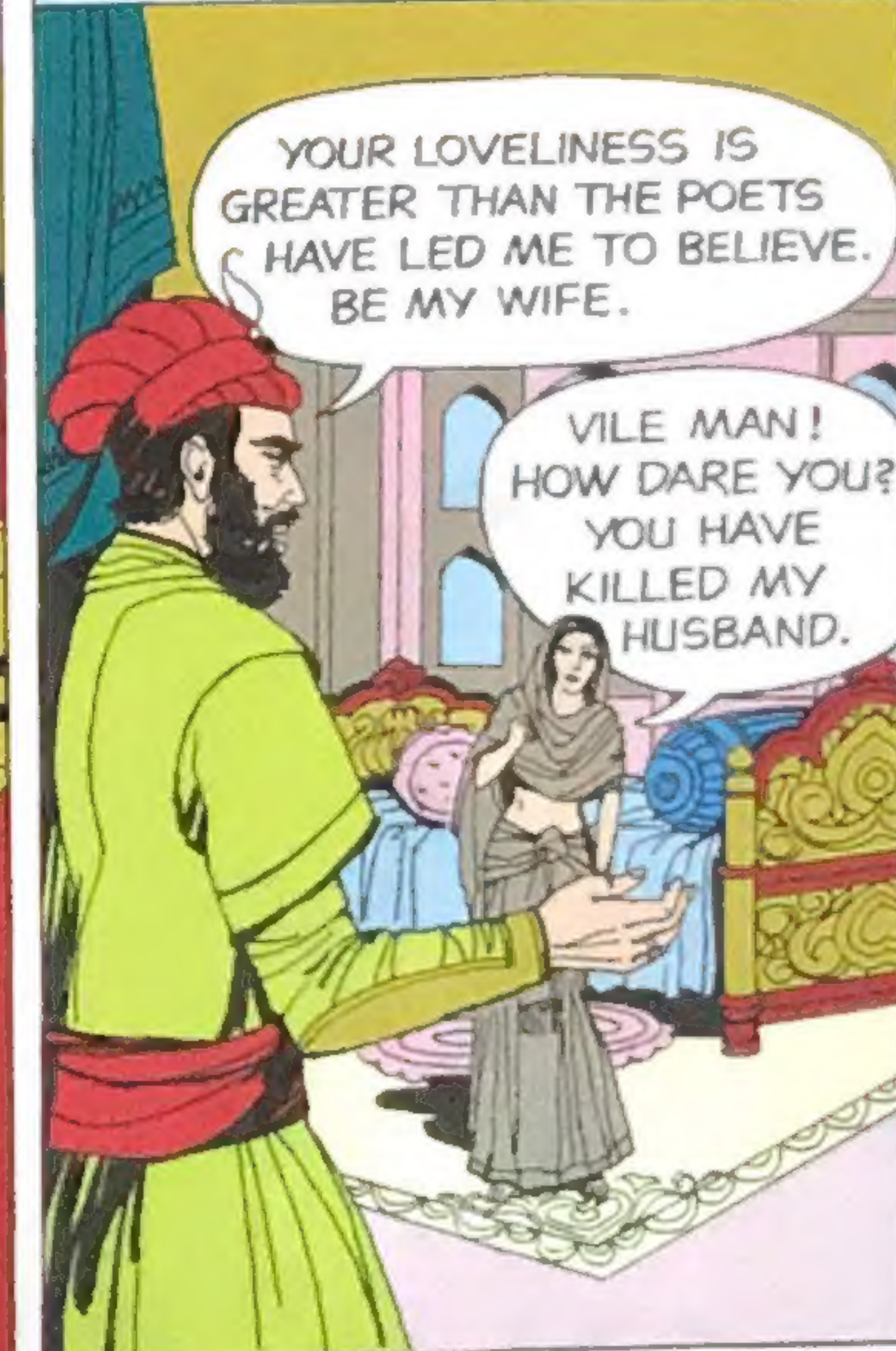
BAZ BAHADUR LEFT WITH HIS FORCES. HE HAD SPENT HIS LIFE IN THE PLEASURES OF LOVE AND SONG. THIS WAS HIS FIRST REAL MILITARY OPERATION.

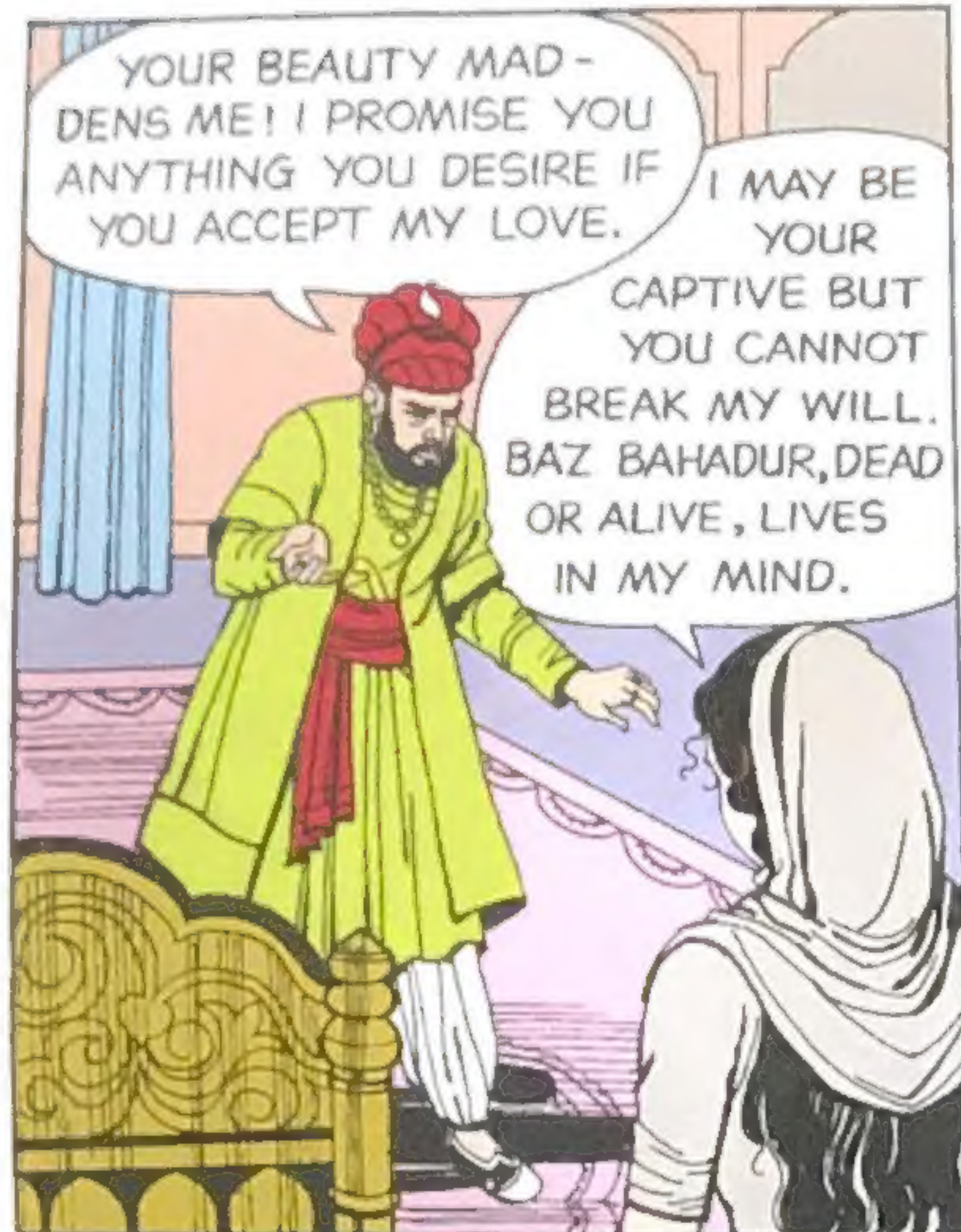


THE VICTORIOUS ADHAM KHAN MARCHED TO MANDU AT THE HEAD OF HIS FORCES.



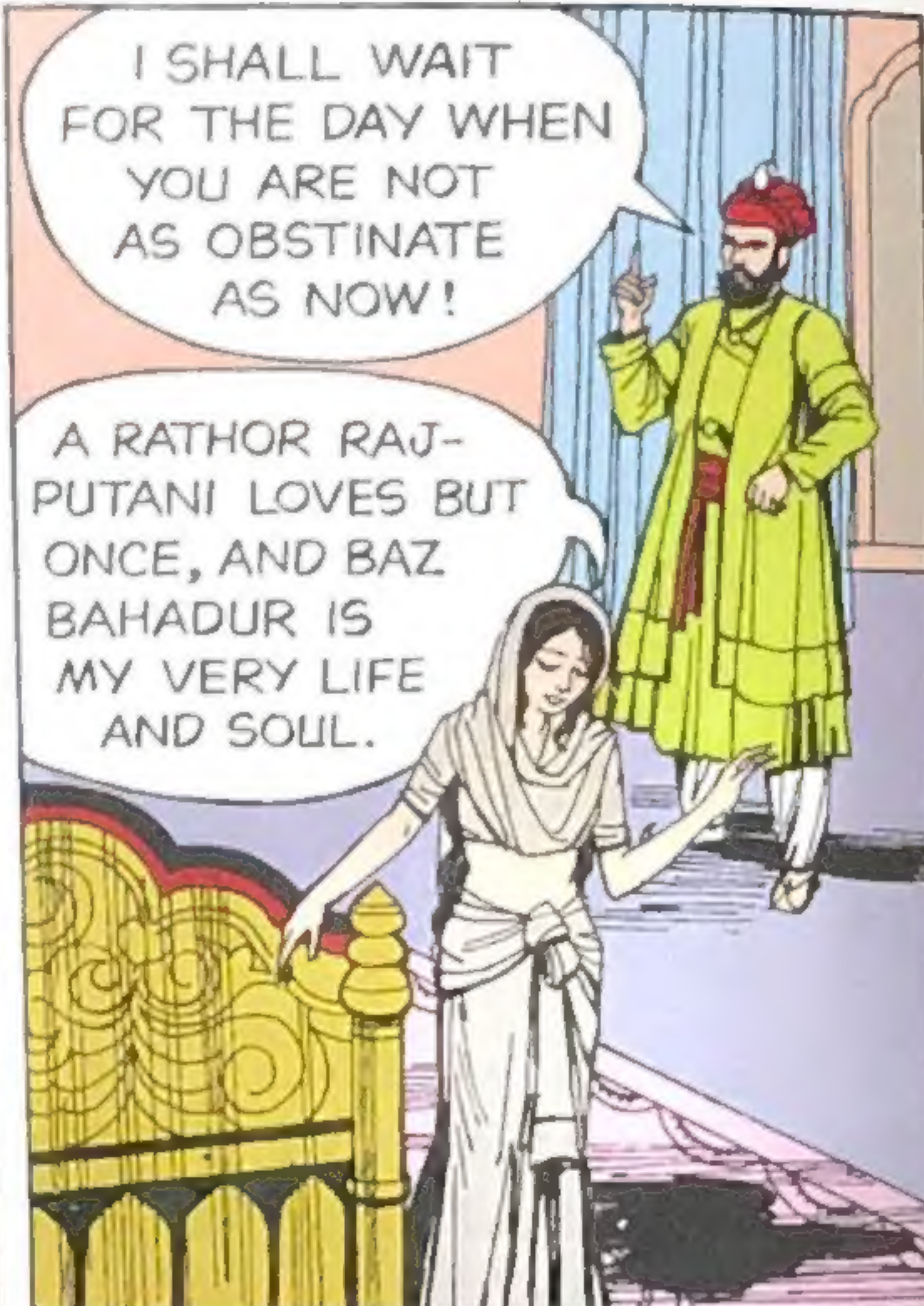
HE ENTERED ROOPMATI'S CHAMBER. HE HAD HEARD ABOUT HER CHARMS.





YOUR BEAUTY MAD-
DENS ME! I PROMISE YOU
ANYTHING YOU DESIRE IF
YOU ACCEPT MY LOVE.

I MAY BE
YOUR
CAPTIVE BUT
YOU CANNOT
BREAK MY WILL.
BAZ BAHADUR, DEAD
OR ALIVE, LIVES
IN MY MIND.



I SHALL WAIT
FOR THE DAY WHEN
YOU ARE NOT
AS OBSTINATE
AS NOW!

A RATHOR RAJ-
PUTANI LOVES BUT
ONCE, AND BAZ
BAHADUR IS
MY VERY LIFE
AND SOUL.



ADHAM KHAN LEFT HER.

OH, GODDESS
REWA, WHAT
HAVE I DONE
TO SUFFER
SO?



FOR THREE DAYS ROOPMATI DID NOT
EAT OR DRINK. ON THE THIRD NIGHT
SHE SUMMONED HER MAID.

DRESS ME
UP IN MY
BRIDAL
ATTIRE.

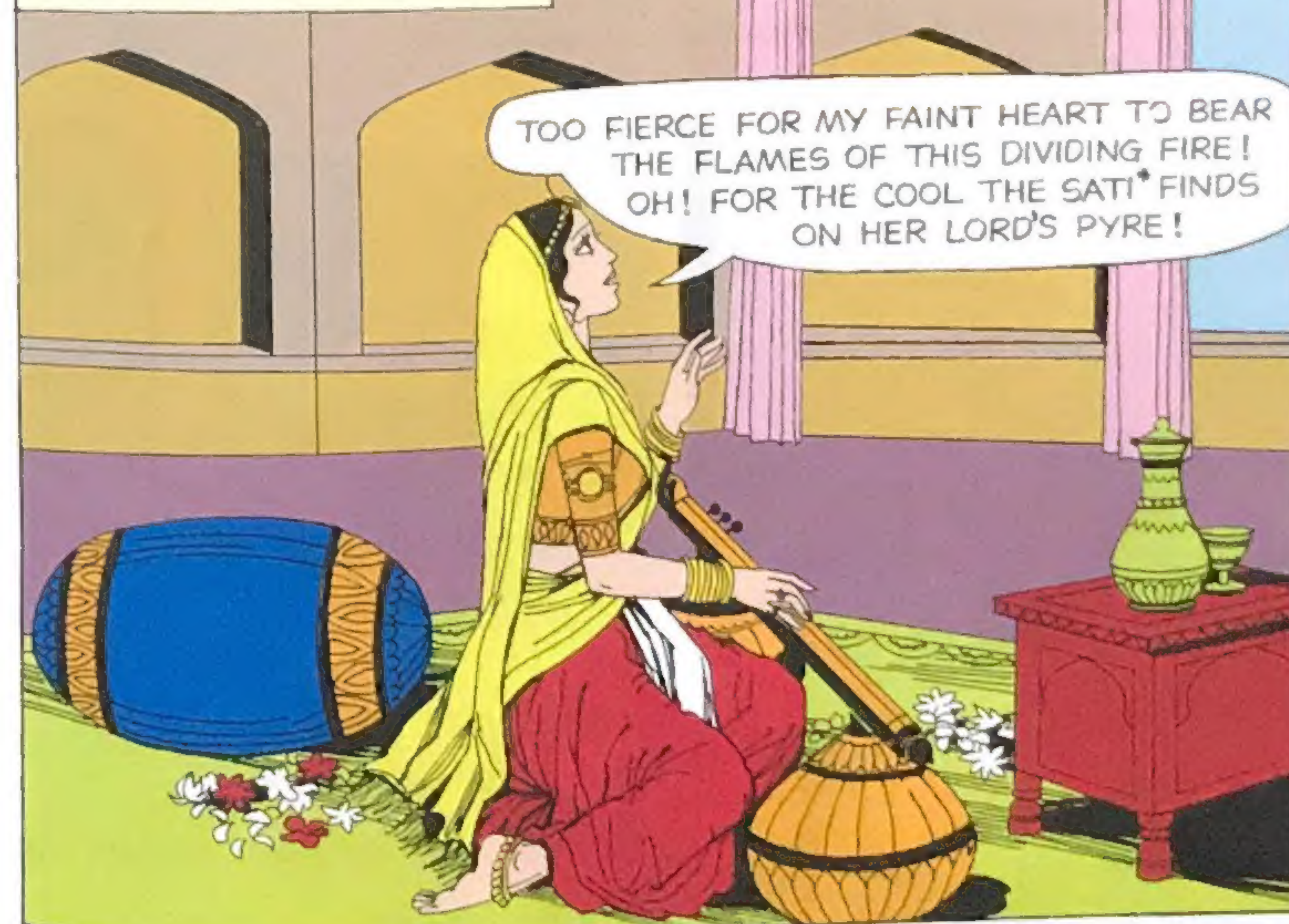


AT ADHAM KHAN'S COURT.

SIRE, GOOD
NEWS! ROOPMATI
HAS DONNED HER
WEDDING GARMENTS-
FOR YOU, SIRE.

ALMS OF GOLD
AND SILVER TO
THE POOR!
LET THE
PALACE
BE LIT!
TONIGHT,
WE MAKE
MERRY AND
REJOICE!

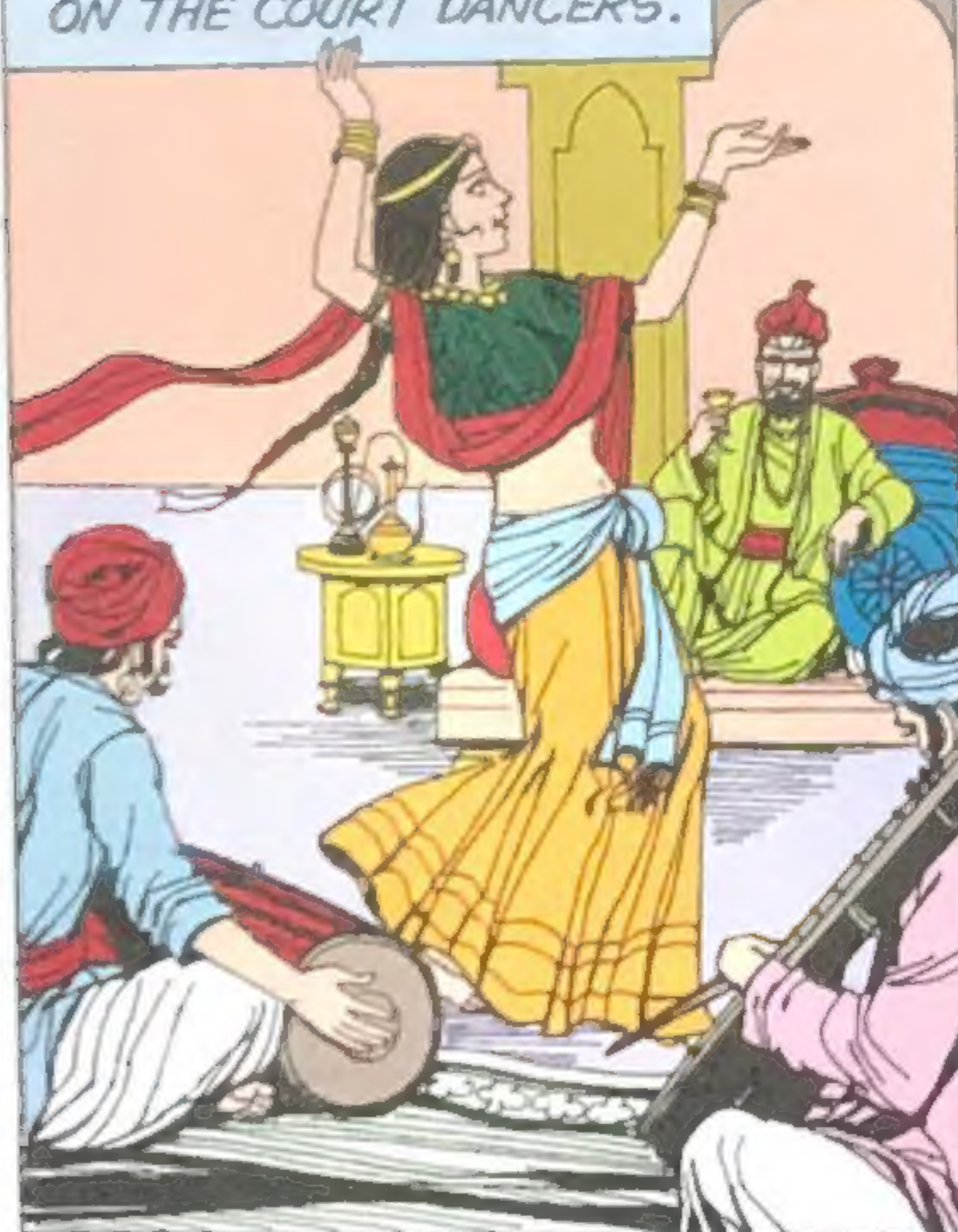
ROOPMATI, DRESSED AS A BRIDE, HER HEART FILLED WITH REMINISCENCES OF
BAZ BAHADUR, PLAYED UPON HER BEEN. HER VOICE WAS PLAINTIVE, LIKE
THE NOTES OF A BIRD THAT HAD LOST ITS MATE. THE WHOLE NIGHT
PASSED IN THIS MANNER.



TOO FIERCE FOR MY FAINT HEART TO BEAR
THE FLAMES OF THIS DIVIDING FIRE!
OH! FOR THE COOL THE SATI* FINDS
ON HER LORD'S PYRE!

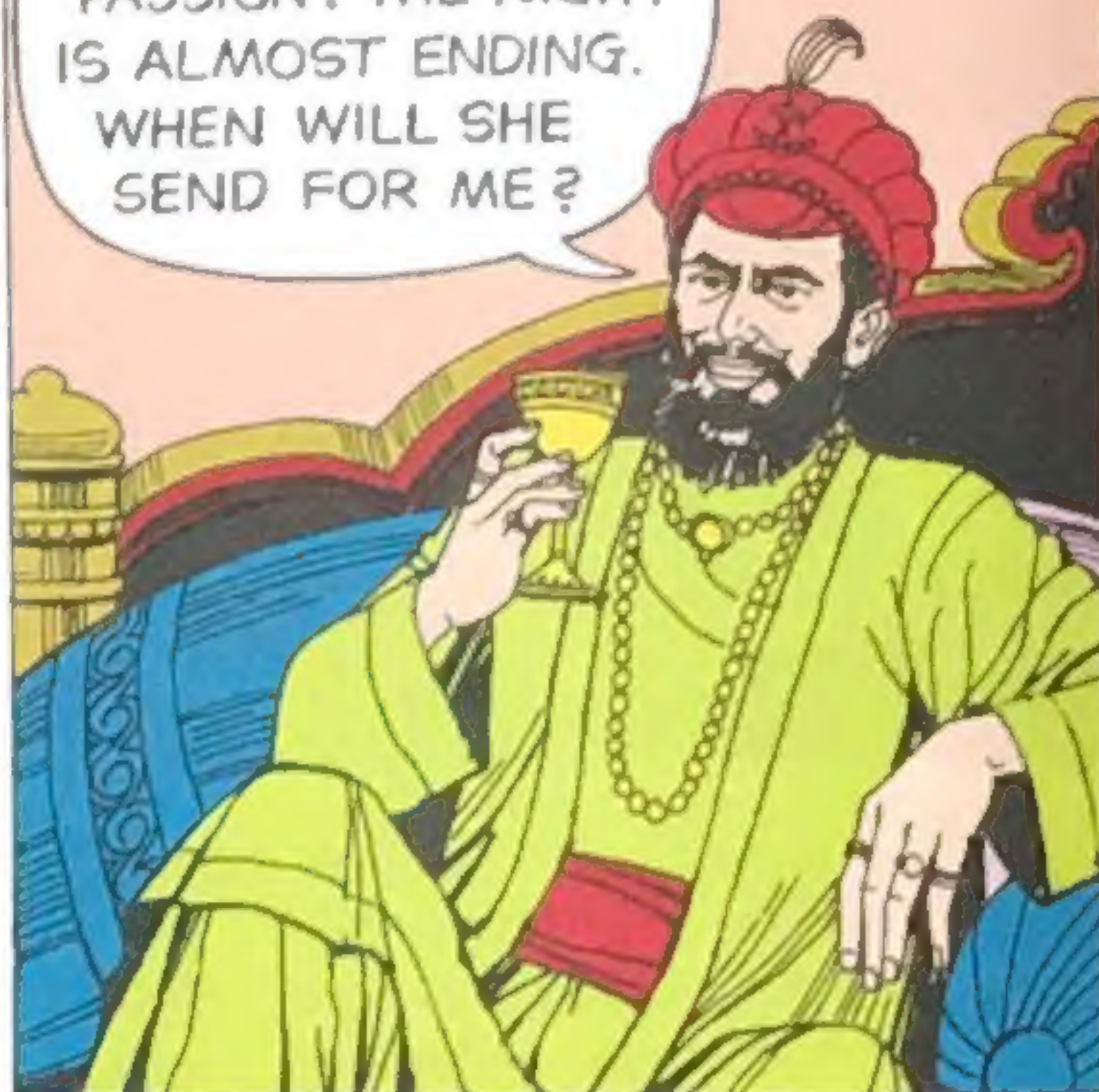
* THE WIDOW WHO PREPARES TO END HER LIFE
ON HER HUSBAND'S FUNERAL PYRE.

ADHAM KHAN IN HIS COURT, TIPSY WITH DRINK, FEASTED HIS EYES ON THE COURT DANCERS.



THE DANCE OVER, ADHAM KHAN'S THOUGHTS TURNED TO ROOPMATI.

I HEAR ROOPMATI SING, SUCH FEELING AND PASSION! THE NIGHT IS ALMOST ENDING. WHEN WILL SHE SEND FOR ME?



ROOPMATI PREPARED FOR THE NIGHT AND SUMMONED HER MAID.



I AM RETIRING TO MY CHAMBER. SUMMON ADHAM KHAN.

SHE ENTERED HER ROOM AND SWALLOWING A FATAL DOSE OF POWDERED DIAMOND...



... LAY DOWN PEACEFULLY ON THE ROYAL BED MADE READY FOR HER.



IN THE DANCE HALL -

THE PRINCESS BIDS YOU TO HER CHAMBER.

THIS IS THE MOMENT I WAS WAITING FOR!



HE STRUTTED IN EXHULTANTLY AND FOUND ROOPMATI ASLEEP, A LOOK OF GREAT SERENITY ON HER FACE.



OH! WHAT A CHARMING DOVE! A HOURI* FROM THE HEAVENS!

ADHAM KHAN KNELT BESIDE HER, TOOK HER HAND IN HIS AND -



SHE IS DEAD! GUARDS...

A GUARD CAME RUNNING ALONG WITH A MAID.

ROOPMATI IS DEAD! SHE DIED FOR HER LOVER! PREPARE TO BURY HER BY THE SIDE OF BAZ BAHADUR.

ROOPMATI WAS BURIED BY THE SIDE OF BAZ BAHADUR IN THE TOMB THAT BAZ BAHADUR HAD EARLIER BUILT AT SARANGPUR AS THEIR LAST RESTING PLACE.

EVEN TODAY PEOPLE GO TO VISIT THE TOMB OF THESE LOVERS, AND IT IS SAID THAT IN THIS PLACE WHEN YOU CALL OUT THE NAME 'ROOPMATI' THE ECHO THAT ANSWERS IS 'BAZ BAHADUR'.

WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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